DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 165 374 EC 112 988

AUTHOR	McNett, Ian E.
TITLE	"I Don't Consider Myself Handicapped". Profiles of Adults in Special Education.
INSTITUTION	City Univ. of New York, N.Y. Queens Coll. New Careers Training Lab.
SPONS AGENCY	Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	CASE-29-78
GRANT	G007601963
NOTE	54p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; *Employment Potential; *Handicapped; *School Personnel; *Special Education; *Vocational Adjustment
IDENTIFIERS	*Personal Experiences

ABSTRACT

The book reports on a study of 65 handicapped adults working in special education programs and includes case studies. Positions occupied by these handicapped adults include aides, teachers, administrators, speech therapists, psychologists, and guidance counselors; their handicaps include blindness, cerebral palsy, deafness, and dwarfism. The advantages to hiring such people to work in special education are pointed out, and the ways they overcome obstacles in their work are illustrated. (DLS)

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I DON'T CONSIDER MYSELF HANDICAPPED

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PROFILES OF ADULTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

EC 112 988

IAN McNETT

"I Don't Consider Myself Handicapped"

Profiles of Adults in Special Education

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Center for Advanced Study in Education
Graduate School and University Center
City University of New York

CASE #29-78

EC112988

PREFACE

In the case of this report, as so often before, Bob Herman at the Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped was quick not only to grasp an idea but also to make it happen. At a meeting of the Washington Policy Seminar, those valuable programs put together by George Kaplan for the Institute for Educational Leadership, we had pointed to the parallel developments in extending education to all handicapped children and in the drive for equality of handicapped adults. Out of this discussion and with Bob Herman's support, came the idea of looking at examples of handicapped adults working in special education programs.

Interestingly, as Ian McNett learned, few people knew of such examples or seemed to care. While some may argue that this attitude reflects a proper disregard of a person's physical condition—somewhat analogous to being color blind with regard to race—the reality of the professional and employment opportunities for the handicapped adult suggests a different explanation. People did not know because they did not care or because they assumed that the handicapped could not do serious professional work. As Ian McNett found, the handicapped adult, despite great problems, can and does make an important contribution to the education of handicapped children—not just as a role model but simply, and powerfully, as a qualified professional.

We owe many people our thanks in helping us to carry out this inquiry. At the Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped, Bob Herman proves daily that one can combine a passion for justice and the bureaucratic skills to achieve one's goals, and Doris Gamser so often provided gentle and wise guidance.

Ian McNett undertook a difficult task with care and skill to produce a report that is both informative and compassionate. Susan Podbielski fitted the editing into her already full schedule and Renelda Higgins took on the design and layout with great verve. In his first busy weeks as Chancellor of the New York City schools, Frank J. Macchiarola was kind enough to arrange for us to "borrow" his two student photographers, Samuel James and Carl Sulit, and to have Carol Brownell and Charles Schonhaut assist us in arranging for the picture taking.

Most of all, we are grateful to the adults themselves, who so freely and openly talked with us about their achievements and problems. Neither should be minimized and we hope that this report will bring us closer to the day that it will be impossible to do a study of the "best" cases of handicapped adults in special education because their number will be so great.

Alan Gartner
Project Director

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Introduction: The Exceptional Adult

An exceptional person, according to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, is either uncommon or extraordinary or one whose "endowments or intelligence are unusually high or low." In the world of education for the handicapped, the label, "exceptional," usually is reserved for the handicapped child.

This study which focuses on the experiences of 65 handicapped adults working in special education shows that "exceptional" can also be applied to adults—people who until very recently were forgotten and ignored by those who spoke on behalf of the handicapped. It was carried out under the auspices of the New Careers Training Laboratory, Center for Advanced Study in Education, Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York, and was funded by the Office of Education's Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped (BEH). BEH wanted to know what problems handicapped people faced on the job and how these problems were dealt with. In addition, it wanted to determine if there was any benefit in hiring handicapped people to work with handicapped children.

When the study started, Alan Gartner, director of the New Careers Training Laboratory, recalled the index of equality propounded by Ewald Nyquist, former Education Commissioner for the State of New York. Nyquist contended that the success of Ralph Bunche did not indicate equality; equality is when a Black schlemiel has the same opportunity as a white schlemiel.

Gartner wondered: Would the study find schlemiels among the handicapped employees of special education? Or would it turn up a "handicapped elite"?

The study's participants who were found in 16 different communities around the nation were all Ralph Bunches. They were attractive, articulate, capable, committed, and concerned. They were exceptional people in both senses of that word. And many of them had exceptionally difficult times finding work in public education.

This study, while by no means designed to be a scientific or random sample, was intended to be as generally representative as possible. For example, a broad range of handicapping conditions was to be included. BEH felt the study should uncover as wide a variety of work roles as could be found—aides, teachers, administrators, psychologists, and other professionals who work with children. The study also was supposed to reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic, and community diversity of the nation—both rural schools and metropolitan districts were to be included.

Some of these conditions were imperfectly achieved. Among the groups hardest to find were: handicapped minority group members, mentally retarded employees, employees with learning disabilities, emotionally disturbed employees, and cases in the Northeast. It was easier to reach special education employees who were deaf, blind, or physically handicapped.

In finding subjects, school officials had to be approached gingerly. They were often defensive and fearful about Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act which makes schools liable to loss of federal funds if they discriminate against the handicapped in hiring practices. While a great number of schools conceded they had no handicapped employees, they hastened to assure that they were in compliance with Section 504. Being in compliance simply means signing a statement which says that the school doesn't discriminate against handicapped people if they apply for jobs.

Several of the nation's most massive school systems either refused to participate in the study or claimed lack of knowledge about handicapped employees in their schools. Often, it was difficult to penetrate the bureaucracy. Inquiries often were transferred from office to office in search of the person who had the knowledge, the authority, or the courage to say yes or no. A representative of one of the nation's largest school systems said, "I just don't want to talk about this on the phone."

Given the attention that the handicapped are currently receiving, there is astonishing ignorance about their role as employees in special education. A conclusion of this study is that there are more handicapped people teaching in

special education than supposedly knowledgeable people are aware of, but far fewer than would be justified by the proportion of handicapped in the population—around 10 percent. Here are some quotes:

"It simply isn't happening," said a vice president of a prestigious association which represents the handicapped.

"You can count the number of handicapped teachers in special education in this state on the fingers of one hand," declared an official of the California Department of Special Education. Two handfuls of handicapped professionals were interviewed in Los Angeles alone, and others could have been spoken to if the interviewer had had more time.

The individuals who participated in this study generally were located on the basis of someone's personal knowledge of particular schools or teachers. Rarely did sources such as state special education departments have insights into what was occurring in this important area. Louisiana and Oklahoma, however, were exceptions. Tips came from widely varying sources—an association for the handicapped, a governor's office for the employment of the handicapped, or a state department of vocational rehabilitation.

But the procedure that uncovered the most cases was to call patiently school district after school district and ask the question directly. Almost the entire mailing list of the Council of Great City Schools was called. It can be seen in the following document how many were able or willing to give a positive response. Most often the law was cited—the one that prevents schools from identifying handicapped people in their records.

From the U.S. Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to the personnel offices of individual school districts, with a range of official and unofficial agencies and organizations in between, nobody seems to be speaking for the handicapped adult who wants to work in special education. There may be a group somewhere that is working in this area, but a very large number of phone calls didn't uncover it. This is in sharp contrast to the civil rights groups of a decade ago that fought to get Black and Spanish-American teachers into schools with Black and Spanish-American students.

Out of this maze of bureaucracy and unknowing, five dozen individuals emerged with crystalline clarity. They gave freely of their time and life experience. Each of them was personally interested in the outcome of the study. Only in one instance did a handicapped person refuse to be interviewed and in another case, one did not want his name used.

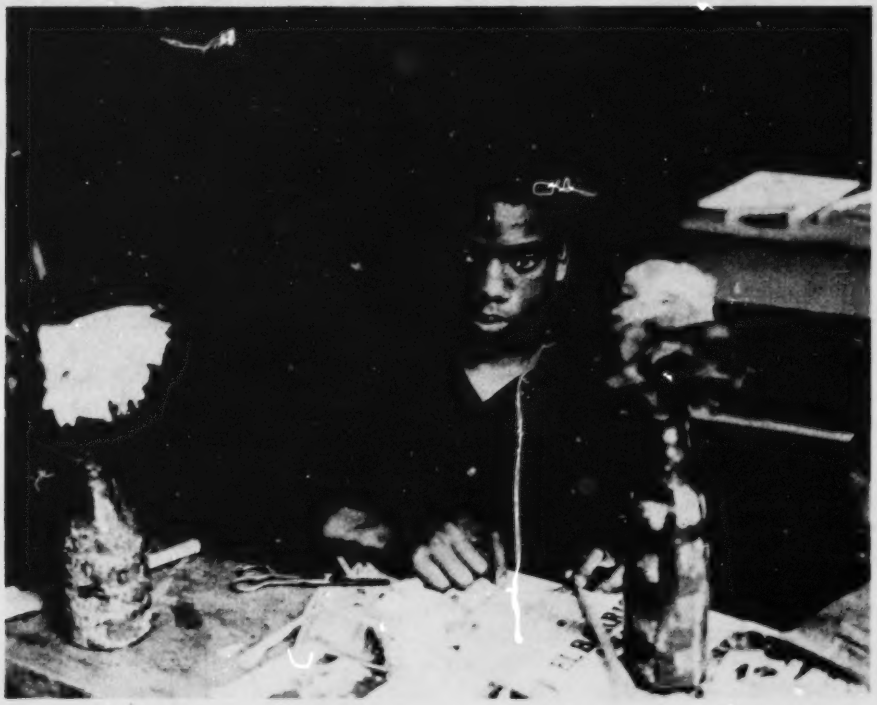
The problem of physical access to work places, which has been the focus of much federal effort, was not a serious one because the employees worked in buildings that had been adapted for use by handicapped children. Many of the employees had run into barriers getting jobs. While this was most common among people who sought employment ten or more years ago, several did report difficulties over the past couple of years.

Other problems were easily handled. The blind teacher would hire a reader to do paperwork or required reading. A dwarf had her desk cut down to size and a platform built in front of the blackboard. Aides were provided where necessary, and teachers bartered services with other teachers. For example, a blind teacher might volunteer to monitor another classroom if that teacher would take the blind teacher's students on a field trip.

Handicapped people who served as aides, teachers, administrators, speech therapists, psychologists, guidance counselors, and so on were cognizant of the added benefits they brought to their handicapped students. While they emphasized that such benefits depended on the individual, there did seem to be a greater empathy and dedication. Handicapped adults do serve as models for children with similar disabilities. Children often ask them about how they made it in the world: Did they get married? Could they drive a car? What was it like to go to college?

Hopefully, the experiences reported here will encourage other schools to hire the handicapped for both special and regular education programs. A number of those interviewed had worked successfully in both settings. Some had tried regular education and found it too hard. Others simply preferred working with handicapped children. Their stories are told here mostly in their own words.

"NOTHING BUT THE BEST KIND OF RELATIONS"



Carl Sulit

The Special Education District was created 20 years ago to serve the needs of handicapped children in 23 school districts in St. Louis County, Missouri. During those two decades, most of the physical barriers limiting the mobility of handicapped people have been eliminated. So have most of the attitudes that often serve as barriers to the employment of the handicapped.

Robert L. Huskey, 42, the assistant superintendent, who is confined to a wheelchair due to an injury incurred in military service in 1951, has been with the district for 15 of its 20 years. "We've always hired the handicapped," he asserts.

"I have had nothing but the best kind of relations with the professional staff with whom I've worked for the past 15 years," Huskey says. "Everybody has been very cooperative, all the way from coaches, janitors, and bus drivers to the Board of Education. If anything, it's almost been forgotten that I am disabled. I have never been denied any opportunity in terms of promotion, opportunities to present my ideas, or to grow professionally."

Huskey has served the district as a teacher, a supervisor, a program coordinator, and as assistant superintendent. His positive experience is shared with nine other employees who were interviewed for this study. They included six teachers, a teacher's aide, a graphic artist, a copy room manager, and a custodian. Their handicapping conditions include physical handicaps and speech impairment due to cerebral palsy, hearing impairment, physical disabilities due to accident or polio, and visual impairment. One teacher was both visually-impaired and physically disabled.

Only one of these employees reported any resistance from co-workers because of a handicapping condition. Each had devised his or her own ways to deal with problems that arose during the course of a workday. Without exception, the employees reported that they feel that no

physical barriers limit their ability to perform their duties.

Huskey explains that all of the buildings served by the district have been modified to accomodate the needs of the children and the handicapped staff members. Busses are equipped with lifts to handle wheelchairs. The buildings have ramps instead of stairs and elevators where necessary. Bathroom facilities and drinking fountains have been designed to serve all the children and adults who use them.

According to Huskey, such modifications add nothing to the cost of a new building. While the cost of modifying existing buildings can be high, there are many changes which can be made at minimal cost. Costs are highest for multi-storied buildings.

Dale Moore, career education coordinator, said that the biggest advantage in hiring the handicapped relates to insights they provide in terms of program and facilities. "When it comes to programming, we pretty much have these people as a resource. They know what it's all about," Moore states. Moore explains that the district was created in 1958 to provide centralized special education services to all the school districts in the county. The district serves 23 school districts and 13,600 students. St. Louis County, a suburb of the City of St. Louis, embraces 515 square miles and 93 municipalities.

Charles Schneider, 50, teaches physically handicapped students from grades seven through ten at Shriner's Hospital. Schneider, who had polio at age six and walks with crutches, has been with the district since it started. "I have never run across any problems," he says. "My relationship with people here has always been one of respect. I've never had any problems with access to any of the buildings."

Schneider talks of his work with great enthusiasm and recalls his students fondly. Former students call him "the coach or the professor," Schneider says. Many still send him cards and letters of remembrance. He started his career as a home teacher. Now, in addition to regular classroom assignments, he works privately with handicapped pupils.

"Many times, these children are ignored," Schneider declares. "People look at their handicaps first, without looking at their minds. I do the reverse."

He believes the fact that he is handicapped provides encouragement for the students he works with. Huskey feels the benefits of hiring the handicapped as teachers depends on the individuals involved, although he says, "I'd hesitate to make a generalization." His personal experience shows that students did look to him as a model. Some of his students would seek him out to ask questions and talk about their hopes for the future.

"They saw me as a handicapped adult who was, quote, successful—married, with a family, and two cars in the garage," Huskey says.

He speaks with feeling of the class that invited him to be commencement speaker after he had been promoted to an administrative position. "It was one of the highest compliments I have ever been paid," he says. The invitation was evidence of the rapport he had established with his students.

One of the most mobile professional employees of the St. Louis Special District is multiply handicapped. Paula Nathan, 26, is legally blind and physically handicapped from congenital brain damage. She is an itinerant teacher who provides special services to classroom teachers of learning disabled children in three schools. Nathan cheerfully asserts that her major problem is trying to get a cab in bad weather to take her from school to school.

Nathan, who has some vision and walks with the aid of braces, works with children aged 4 to 10 in developing their perceptual and motor skills. She doubts that the children she works with pay much attention to her disabilities. At least they don't talk about it.

Nancy Scanlon, 36, also is physically handicapped from cerebral palsy. She is working for the special district for the second time. During 1963-64 she taught educable mentally retarded students in the district. After 13 years in Florida where she worked with the handicapped in a vocational rehabilitation program, Scanlon returned to the district in 1977. She now teaches "the oldest class of severely handicapped

children"—the 17-20 age group. The IQs of her students range in the 40s.

At the time she was hired, Scanlon was asked if she could walk two miles to the shopping center where students are taken to orient them to community life: "I didn't know if I could make it, but I said I could. I managed to make that two-mile walk. We have a bus now, because the physically able teachers said it was too far to walk.

"I think the fact that I'm disabled has at times been an asset," Scanlon says. When she worked for the vocational rehabilitation agency in Florida, she explains, "A selective service referral walked in. I was sitting behind a desk. The client said he couldn't do this and he couldn't do that. I got up and walked to the door. He said, 'I think I feel fine.' I said, 'I thought you would.'"

It also can be an asset in working with handicapped children, she says. "It makes the kids realize that they may be retarded, but I walk funny, too. They find out that everybody has problems."

The Special Education District also employs several hearing-impaired individuals. Among them is Greg Peterson, who has established an industrial arts program for hearing-impaired junior and senior high school students and is now doing the same thing for elementary children at Litzinger School. The others are: Karen Beck, an aide who works with hearing-impaired elementary children; Andrew Mire, a graphic artist in the district's media center; and Myra Sue Rosenthal, a psychologist who examines children in the district's clinic.

Peterson's class was ending as he prepared for the interview for this study. Eight and nine-year-old students were sawing wood and hammering nails. "The emphasis in my classroom is to permit kids to know what it's like to be a carpenter, plumber, draftsman, and so forth," Peterson explains. "They explore different fields to get a better idea of what they might want to be in the future."

Peterson was the first deaf teacher hired to teach hearing-impaired children at the Litzinger School, which offers a program for the hearing- and visually-impaired. Some teachers were resistant to the idea of hiring a deaf teacher, according to Litzinger's principal, Daryl Ellsworth. The philosophy of some of the staff was that deaf children should be taught to communicate orally only through speaking and lip reading.

These teachers thought learning sign language would impair the children's ability to communicate effectively in an oral world. They didn't believe a deaf person could teach oral communication effectively, according to Ellsworth. Both Ellsworth and Peterson feel that the resistance has ended. Indeed, Litzinger School now teaches both oral communication and sign language to its students. And although Peterson's hearing is severely impaired, he can communicate effectively without sign language. He conducted the interview for this study without using sign language and without an interpreter.

Peterson feels an obligation to be a model to the students he teaches. "I try to help them as a counselor," he says. "I feel it is my additional duty to help out, whatever the need. That is why I like to provide fatherly guidance."

Ellsworth, who gives Peterson a high rating as a teacher, had great difficulty finding a teacher who was qualified in both deaf education and industrial arts. He spent $300 in phone calls looking for such a teacher, and found Peterson while he was still in college. "I waited a semester to establish the program in order to get Greg," Ellsworth says.

Ellsworth also is impressed with the ability of Karen Beck, a teaching aide, to understand and help hearing-impaired children with emotional problems. Beck started at the school in 1976. "She is very, very perceptive," asserts Ellsworth. Beck works with severely impaired children. Some are deaf, some brain-damaged, and some retarded. "Because I have a good education, I want these kids to be aware that they can do anything with their lives," she declares. "I have the talent to help kids. I have the patience that some people don't have."

Peterson and Beck work in an environment where other staff members have an understanding of sign language and with whom they can communicate. However, Andrew Meyer, a

graphic artist, had to create an environment in which he could understand others and be understood. None of the staff at the media center knew sign language when Meyer joined it.

Meyer came to St. Louis County looking for a job after he lost a position in Rochester, N.Y., because of an economic slump. William O. Mauk, medical center director, hired him, even though the center lacked funds to pay a graphic artist. "Frankly, we hired Andy because he was willing to work for less money than a hearing person," Mauk says. Meyer was first hired on a part-time basis. Later, enough funds were found to hire him full time.

The staff at the center was not resistant to hiring Meyer. And it has displayed a lot of patience in helping him become more comfortable on the job. Although Meyer can lip read, Mauk speaks to him in sign.

Meyer had the most trouble making sure he knew precisely what was expected of him. He adopted a strategy of asking questions and repeating back instructions until he was sure that he fully understood. However, he has made the most of his disability in working with other employees. He is teaching his co-workers sign language and they have found it to be a great asset when shooting film in a classroom because they can communicate without disrupting the class.

Meyer frankly confesses that he often feels left out. He often assumes that he is the only staff member who has not been informed of new policies or activities. However, he is learning that other employees may know no more than he does. Because he cannot hear, he doesn't know what has been told to the staff and what hasn't.

Although Meyer lip reads in staff meetings, he cannot be in a position to watch the faces of everyone and has to wait until after the meetings to ask other members what went on. But his initiative in teaching sign language has begun to pay off. In December, one of Meyer's students, conducted the first staff meeting in sign language.

Another hearing-impaired employee of the district is Myra Sue Rosenthal, 30, a psychological examiner. She tests and evaluates children for possible placement in one of the district's programs and has worked for the district since August, 1971.

Rosenthal's only difficulty is that she sometimes has difficulty understanding children with speech or language problems. In that case, the children are switched to another psychologist. "I feel comfortable working here," she says. "People accept me and the results of my work. It's been easy that way."

In addition to its professional and paraprofessional employees who are handicapped, the district employs several handicapped people in nonprofessional capacities such as in the food service, custodial, and maintenance departments, and running the copying office. There are more than a dozen handicapped custodial employees, for example.

William Hobson, who says he's a slow learner and speech-impaired, joined the custodial staff in October, 1976. Hobson, 21, says he started by working with his father, after graduating from the Special District schools. "I said when I graduated I wanted to work with this school district," he says. "I get along real good; people really like me."

Another graduate of the district is Tim, 28, who has cerebral palsy. Tim, who prefers not to be identified by his full name, has worked in the copy room of the administration building since July, 1978. He says he has no problems because of his handicap: "My only problem is people who have rush copying orders when I am very busy."

The experience of the Special District shows that people with a wide variety of handicaps can be employed productively in positions that carry a great range of responsibilities. The district has adapted its facilities to serve the handicapped. Other obstacles are dealt with on an individual basis. The visitor to the district receives the strong impression that most of its handicapped employees are deeply dedicated to working with handicapped children. Knowing what it's like to be handicapped, they want to help others achieve a full and meaningful life.

"A SIGN THAT THE

"Quiet, People Working," orders the sign in the outer office at Marlton School in Los Angeles. Yet a constant buzz and clatter of activity permeates the busy room. Students seek passes. Teachers hustle about on errands or to check their mailboxes. Delivery people dump packages. Typewriters clatter and telephones ring. Conversations are carried on verbally and in sign language. Blacks, whites, and Spanish-Americans mingle in apparent harmony. The principal, Clarence Clark, is Black; the vice principal, Dennis Matsumoto, is Oriental.

There is a melting pot quality about the one-story, modern facility with its wide curving ramps, wide doors and halls, and covered outdoor cafeteria. Steep bluffs studded with Spanish-style homes overlook the school, which is accessible to people with all types of handicaps, but specifically serves the deaf and the hearing-impaired.

Carol Billone, 34, was the first deaf teacher to be hired in Los Angeles ten years ago. Now 11 deaf teachers serve on the Marlton staff of 61. Some individuals who were interviewed for this study limited their sense of mission and dedication to their own classrooms. But a number of others expressed broader concerns and became activists or advocates in the school, the school system, or the wider community. Billone belongs to the latter group.

Billone, who was chosen as California's "Teacher of the Year" for 1975-1976, says, "My kids could not believe that somebody higher up actually looked up to a deaf adult. For them it was a sign that the sky's the limit; just maybe there was a chance for them."

Two other deaf staff members at Marlton agree with Billone about the benefits of having deaf teachers work with deaf children. Barbara Richardson, 29, a deaf math teacher, said her own experience led her to believe she served as a model for the children.

"When I was in elementary school," she says, "all the teachers were hearing. As soon as I entered junior high school, I decided to become a teacher because of the deaf teachers at the school."

John Goul, 32, teaches physical education to preschoolers, elementary students, and middle school classes. On the day of this interview, he was supervising elementary students who were learning to jump rope in a warm, protected spot next to the school building. Goul, who believes that deaf teachers can communicate more effectively with deaf students than hearing teachers, is teaching his students that they can enjoy and compete in sports. His own experience testifies to this—he played college football for four years and took silver and bronze medals in the Deaf Olympics.

Matsumoto, the assistant principal, says the only accomodation the school makes for its deaf staff members has to do with public address announcements and fire bells. "We rely on the buddy system in these cases," he explains. "The next door neighbor goes in to tell the deaf teacher about an announcement. In the case of emergencies like fire drills, there are flashing red lights."

In asserting the benefits of disabled teachers, Matsumoto is more cautious than some administrators in special education. However, he feels that deaf teachers probably communicate better with deaf children than hearing persons do because "sign is their native language.... Deaf people use it much more frequently than hearing people, and therefore are more proficient."

More than 20 schools provide special education services in Los Angeles, one of them is the Joseph Pomeroy Widney High School which serves a diverse group of physically handicapped youngsters. The principal and the assistant principal have physical handicaps, as do two of the teachers and an aide.

SKY'S THE LIMIT"

Los Angeles Unified School District

Los Angeles, California

Principal Harry Schmoll, who had polio, attended Widney as a student and then returned as teacher and principal. Walking with a slight limp, he moves through the high school with friendly and encouraging words for the students he meets: "How are you doing, Tony?" or "How's that project coming, Maria?" Schmoll brushes aside any suggestion that a person who is handicapped can't handle discipline problems: "If you use the argument that a person who is handicapped can't deal with discipline, then we'd better stop hiring older persons, too. It's a ridiculous excuse."

Indeed, the Widney staff member who has the most opportunities to deal with discipline issues is Melvin Cash, 57, an aide, who became paralyzed on one side following a stroke. Cash organizes the lines and keeps order in the cafeteria. On the day Cash was interviewed, the cafeteria was operating at full tilt. Trays clattered and students chatted, a typical cafeteria scene. It only seemed disorderly; there were no fights and no disruptions and the lines moved quickly and without problems.

Cash says he had to learn a different way of dealing with students after his stroke. "Some kids respond to a verbal command of 'Quit.' Others require a hand on the shoulder or that you get between them and restrain them. I've had to get around doing that by developing more verbal authority."

If he has particular difficulty with a student, Cash works with them to develop a "one-to-one rapport." He has worked at the school for 22 years. Before his stroke, he worked on the physical care of severely handicapped children, a job that required a great deal of lifting.

Schmoll says there was some difficulty in persuading school authorities to rehire Cash after the stroke. "We fought to get him back. I knew he could do the job. What we did was say his rapport with students had significantly increased. Now, besides being Black, he was handicapped." Schmoll definitely believes that Cash serves as a model for students in the school. He changed Cash's duties from the physically demanding work of physical care to the more emotionally and mentally demanding work of keeping order in the cafeteria.

Three other employees of Widney school have had their mobility impaired either by polio or an amputation. Each of them can move about, but not to the full degree of a person who is not disabled. All report that they can deal with their daily work without any problems or accomodations from the school.

Samuel Cockins, the assistant principal who lost his right leg in 1973 after osteomylitis developed, wears an artificial limb. "It doesn't handicap me at all," he says. "I could actually work in a regular classroom situation. I can go up and down stairs and play golf. I can do everything but run."

Both Shirley Allen, an English teacher, and Marcelina Robinson, a history teacher, say the fact that they have physical limitations rarely comes up in the classroom. Like Schmoll, Allen had polio as a child. She says with a laugh, "To be Black, female, and handicapped can all be positive today when the government is taking an interest in employment opportunities for all three."

She brushes aside the question of whether a handicap is an advantage in teaching handicapped children: "Once you are around someone for a time, they tend to see you as a person.... Whether there is any advantage depends on the type of person you are. I'm busy teaching reading and English. I don't get into my personal life much."

Robinson, who had polio as an infant, says, "I do think there is rapport between me and the children. I hope that they see me as someone who

made it, and realize that they can make it also."

Norbert Castel De Oro, 40, like Assistant Principal Cockins, has an artificial leg. Now working in the special education office of a program that provides management services to teachers, Castel De Oro says his disability did not hamper his full performance of duties as a teacher or as an administrator. "When I was a teacher, the handicapped kids tended to look up to me as a successful person who is handicapped. I think they accepted me more and in a way I was more accepting of them."

Sometimes, he explains, a handicapped person will try to use their handicap to get special privileges or to get out of doing something. "They try to snow people. I'm not as easily snowed as a person who does not understand a handicapping condition." Castel De Oro says that when children say they can't do something because of a disability, the handicapped teacher may know better than one who is not handicapped whether the child is using the condition as an excuse.

Often during this study, a school official would say, "So and so walks with a limp," or "Mr. Blank has only one arm; but I don't consider him handicapped." The official would consider someone who was confined to a wheelchair or a totally blind person as handicapped. The interviews in Los Angeles showed, however, that persons with moderate disabilities often experience the same difficulties in getting jobs as those with more serious impairments.

In these cases, an extra step would sometimes be required—a physical examination that was not requested of other employees or required credentials would be more rigidly insisted upon. Two of the employees interviewed in Los Angeles thought, but knew they could not prove, that they encountered resistance because of their conditions. As is often the case, the resistance is subtle and disguised in terms unrelated to the disability.

Those interviewed here and other employees in Los Angeles overcame whatever difficulties were thrown in their way and are now working as fully effective members of the school system. In each case the resistance occurred ten or more years ago. As a school system, Los Angeles may be more open to hiring the handicapped than most systems encountered during the course of this research.

"IT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE"

Public Schools
Worcester, Massachusetts

What many handicapped people want is a chance to prove themselves. They do not seek or desire special favors although there may be some concessions made by them to their own personal limitations and by the schools as well. But those handicapped persons interviewed for this study exhibited pride in their independence.

"I don't think we should be treated any differently," declares Robert Cashman, a guidance counselor who lost his hands in an industrial accident in 1964. "If I can't do the job, I don't want to be hired."

Cashman sits at a large table at Gates Lane School, an old, multistoried, red brick structure perched on a busy street in a commercial section of Worcester. With Cashman are John Feeley, a blind guidance counselor; Sylvia Glickman, a social worker whose mobility was impaired by polio; and Roland Levin, director of special education.

During the free-ranging interview, it is sometimes hard to hear the person across the table. A machine outside is pounding and clattering. Bells jangle and children scurry from classroom to classroom. This school does not serve the handicapped. It is headquarters for Feeley, who along with Cashman counsels both special and regular classroom students.

The three employees make it clear during the interview that they don't care for the label, "handicapped." They feel they can do their jobs as well as the next person, an evaluation shared by Levin. Glickman prefers limited or limitation over handicapped. "We have certain limitations, like everybody else," she says. "Our group has been singled out by society because we have conditions that society can see."

Feeley, who lost his vision in a military accident during World War II, illustrates Glickman's point: "I was handicapped when I went to college in 1938. We had to take an art course, and I couldn't draw a straight line. I used to pay a girl a nickel to make drawings for me every week."

The three employees emphasize that they perform their duties without accomodation from the schools. Feeley says his wife helps him with materials that need to be written down. Two other employees of the Worcester schools agreed in separate interviews that they had no problems regarding access or resistance from their schools or co-workers. They are Gregory Apkarian, a teacher at Mill Swan School who has cerebral palsy; and Claire D. Thibault, a deaf teacher's aide at the Francis J. McGrath Elementary School.

Worcester has gone to great lengths to remove barriers to the handicapped, according to James Underwood, former director of special education. Even though the main steps at Gates Lane School are high and steep enough to intimidate even a fully mobile person, Worcester has spent a great deal of effort and money to make its educational facilities accessible.

Underwood, now director of pupil personnel

services, says that in places where the handicapped attend school the district has put in ramps, wide doors, appropriate drinking and bathroom facilities, and, where necessary, elevators. Fifteen years ago, the city built the ultra-modern Mill Swan School (with impressive attention to detail) to serve the needs of special education students from Worcester and about 15 other communities.

Stephen Baker, Mill Swan's principal, points out its features during a quick tour of the building. There are, for example, carpets on the hall floors to reduce injuries to children who fall. Bathroom commodes are built back-to-back so the rails can be placed on the walls in a way that assists people who are paralyzed on either side. The classrooms are built around a core of therapy facilities so the children do not have to move, or be moved, far to obtain physical and occupational therapy. All counters are at wheelchair height and the fronts are recessed to leave room for the knees.

It is at Mill Swan School that Gregory Apkarian, a handicapped teacher, helps children learn to read and write with a system called "cybercom." The cybercom mechanism is connected to an electric typewriter. By manipulating from two to seven large keys, the children can select letters from a large screen which are then automatically typed on the typewriter. The system, which provides instant feedback, enables students to learn to write when they cannot manipulate a pencil or the keys of a typewriter

Apkarian, the only trained cybercom teacher in Massachusetts, feels he should train others to provide cybercom services for other handicapped people. For example, he designed a system that could be operated by the touch of the tongue for a person who was paralyzed below the neck. This person learned to type 30 words per minute with the system.

When asked if he had any problems in teaching because of his handicap, Apkarian replied, "I don't feel any more or less handicapped than anybody else. I've taken two flying lessons. There are teachers here who couldn't take flying lessons because they have eyeglasses." In addition, Apkarian has learned to race a 20-foot sailboat. He said he took the boat 20 miles out from Marblehead to prove that he could do it. "I look for performance from every one of my students, exactly like people look for performance from me," Apkarian declared.

Director of Special Education Levin believes that the handicapped employees are an asset to the Worcester schools. Certainly, each of them sees a responsibility to educate the public about the ability of the handicapped to work productively in education and other walks of life.

When asked if there were any special benefits in hiring the handicapped, Principal Baker, of Mill Swan, declared, "I see them as tremendous examples for the children."

Claire Thibault was sought out to teach at McGrath School as a role model for the deaf children. "We sought her out special," Director Levin says.

Kathleen Shea, one of the teachers with whom

Thibault works, sees Thibault as a role model and more. Shea: "A lot of deaf children don't understand the concept of deafness. They think that when they grow up they won't still be deaf. But when they see Claire, they understand that she is deaf, that she is working, that she can be married, and that she can drive a car. It is important for deaf children to understand that being deaf does not disqualify them for life."

Thibault says that children often ask her questions relating to what it means to be a deaf adult. "They ask if they will be able to talk like me; will they be able to drive; will they be able to get a job."

Shea feels that Thibault is also a tremendous resource. Because she is interested in the issue of deafness, she is involved in the community. "Many of the children think that only children can sign, because they haven't been exposed to deaf adults. Claire is a member of the Deaf Club, so we were able to take the children to the Deaf Club's Christmas party. The children went crazy when they saw all of those adults signing."

In addition, Thibault who is highly skilled at signing is able to understand what a child or hearing teacher is trying to say, even if they make mistakes. Because of her facility, she can provide children with immediate feedback when they sign incorrectly, "It makes a big difference to have Claire here," Shea says.

According to Sylvia Glickman, her limitation can be an advantage or disadvantage in her work with children and their parents. In some cases, the fact that Glickman is physically limited offers encouragement to parents that their own children can achieve success in life. But in other cases: "It's a disadvantage when parents haven't worked through their own feelings about their children's condition," Glickman says. However, the fact of Glickman's handicap, a severe limp from polio, can serve as the catalyst for these parents to begin to accept the reality of their children's handicap.

In addition to those interviewed, the Worcester schools employ other handicapped individuals in both special and regular education. Compared to many other school systems, Worcester seems remarkably open to hiring the handicapped. Underwood attributes this willingness to the fact that the schools have been dealing with the handicapped for a long time. "We may have the oldest special education program in the nation," he says. "We were offering special classes more than 100 years ago."

The high caliber of employees that the Worcester schools have attracted certainly has contributed to the willingness to hire more handicapped. Glickman summed up the philosophy of the five employees who were interviewed: "Most of us don't look upon ourselves as handicapped. We accept whatever limitation we have. We understand what we can do and what we can't do. We're so involved in what we can do, that what we can't do is very insignificant to us. It takes us a long time to understand that our own thoughts about ourselves are different from society's. We don't really look at ourselves as having any terribly great difficulty."

"LET'S CALL IT COMPASSION"

Handicapped teachers often bring a large measure of dedication and passion to the teaching of handicapped children. They know what it means to be handicapped and often want to share their hard-earned knowledge about life with the children in the classroom. This sense of service motivates three employees of the Tulsa, Oklahoma public schools—two teachers and an aide.

Patricia Shaver is legally blind. She teaches blind elementary school children who often have other handicaps as well. Although the classroom is elementary level, ages range up to 19. One of her older students is blind, hydrocephalic, confined to a wheelchair, and mentally retarded. "He's too immobile for the school for the blind. They say he couldn't navigate well enough and they wouldn't take him. I'll take anybody," Shaver declared. "Anybody." Shaver's voice contained a lot of passion and emphasis as she made this declaration. "Let's call it compassion," she smiled.

Although Shaver team teaches with a sighted teacher, she is often in the classroom alone with the children and feels she can handle any situation that comes up. While she does not serve on hall or playground duty, she puts in extra effort at things she can do. As a skilled musician, she often plays at school functions.

Like Shaver, Tony Knight brings a sense of mission to his teaching in special education. Knight, 29, has cerebral palsy. It doesn't impair his mobility much, but seems to increase his commitment to the physically handicapped junior high school students in his classroom. He emphasizes the need to prepare his students to live in a world that is largely not handicapped.

"If we can teach other people how to respect these kids, we can teach them to respect themselves," Knight states. "There is more than money to this job; there is personal gratification."

Knight stresses the crucial importance of dealing with the students' disabilities and differences as part of their education. Students often ask why they get laughed at. "I tell them that I get called 'Shakey' because I shake," Knight says. He also tells them about the successful lives of other handicapped adults who live in Tulsa.

One of these is Betty Cline, 56, who has worked with handicapped children for more than 20 years in private and public schools. This year, Cline was serving as an aide for trainable mentally retarded (TMR) elementary children at the Whittier School. Cline, who is mentally retarded, believes this fact helps her have more patience in working with handicapped students. Harvey Weeks, Whittier's principal, agrees and says that Cline has an excellent rapport with the children.

Public Schools
Tulsa, Oklahoma

"These children need help, just like I did," Cline declares. "It's a joy to me to be able to help them. I love it when they make an improvement in things I've helped them with."

In her work with older children, Cline says, "The fact that I can read means something to them." She works with the teachers in a variety of tasks from the physical care of the students to teaching them how to dress, how to manipulate items and objects, how to do simple math problems, and how to speak and sound out words.

Cline says 1977-78 will be her last term in the Tulsa public schools, because she has not been able to overcome her transportation problem. She has been driven to school every day by a student's mother and is picked up in the afternoon by her own 80-year-old mother, who, Cline says, cannot continue driving her every day. Cline will go to a residential facility to live this summer and work either with children in that facility or in the local public schools.

After 15 years at the school of the Children's Medical Center in Tulsa and two years in a day care center, Cline had worked for three years in the public schools. But for two and a half years, she worked as a volunteer because funds could not be found to pay her. The teachers and Principal Weeks "worked and worked to get the money for me," Cline says. "I think it's a dirty shame I didn't get paid until now."

Ruth Holcombe, assistant to the director of Tulsa's special education program, believes that each of the three handicapped employees brings special benefits into the classroom. "In Tony's case, I know there is a benefit," she says. "He's never felt sorry for himself, and that in itself is a modeling process for the students. The same is true of Pat."

Shaver thinks the fact that she is handicapped helps her tune in to the needs and feelings of her students. "All of them have to have some period of almost despair," she says. "Having a handicap and realizing it is very frustrating." Shaver shares her own difficulties with her students, "Like picking up a package of detergent and thinking it's powdered milk. We laugh about it. It has been an incentive to them.

"They can see I'm a happy adult, living out the rest of my life in reasonable success. That has got to be an encouragement to them." Shaver's happy life which includes marriage and children, also consists of handicapped students who often come to her room for a talk. "It can be a kind of therapy for them," Shaver says. "They ask me point blank questions, which I am very happy to answer."

"LET THEM TRY TO DO WHAT THEY WANT"

Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind
Staunton, Virginia

One third of the staff at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind (VSDB) in Staunton, Virginia experiences some degree of deafness or blindness. Everyone working there with the deaf uses sign language, including the secretaries. Deaf staff members who learned sign, almost as their first language, definitely experience no problems at the school. Veteran teachers who are not deaf also are fluent in sign. But a teacher with less experience sometimes has difficulty understanding colleagues and students. In an environment for the hearing-impaired, the hearing person has the disability.

Therefore, deaf staff members at VSDB report that they have no difficulties in working as teachers or administrators. Al Deuel, 35, math teacher and football coach, reported through an interpreter, that he has no problems in his day-to-day work. He feels the only difference in coaching deaf rather than hearing students is that the deaf football player uses his eyes more. Hand gestures are used to signal the snap from center, for example.

The interpreter, David Schuler, 23, believes he may not have as solid a rapport with the deaf children at VSDB as the deaf teachers do. He also had some difficulty with Deuel's rapid finger spelling. Schuler's position is analogous to that of a handicapped person working in a public school where most of the staff is not disabled.

Deuel's own major problem in education occurred in college. His philosophy professor would make no allowances for Deuel's deafness, making him deal with the problem by finding someone to take notes for him, a process that consumed a couple of weeks and left him behind the rest of the class.

In addition to a facility in communicating with deaf children and the rapport that deaf teachers can establish, VSDB teachers also believe that they should serve as models for the students, and, indeed, that they are models.

"I am their model and they will be more ready to accept their handicap as they grow up, says Alice Frick, 35, who has taught at VSDB for 12 years. "They will know that they will be able to function in the world as good citizens. They often ask me many, many questions like, 'How do you get a job?' or, 'How did you learn to drive a car'"

Frick expressed her philosophy of teaching and life: "I do not believe in saying that handicapped children can't do something because they are handicapped or deaf. Let them try to do what they want. They may break through the barriers one day. We should encourage them to try." Frick, whose parents were both deaf, has always lived in a deaf environment. Her father was employed by a residential school for the deaf, which she attended, before going to Gallaudet College for the deaf. Frick's job at VSDB is the only one she has ever held.

VSDB has the ambience of an old private Southern prep school. The campus stands on one of Staunton's many hills. The predominant style is ante-bellum, although many of the newer buildings are modern and functional. The red brick administration building with its massive white columns dominates the campus from the top of the hills. The stairs from Healy, the modern classroom building at the bottom of the hill, to Main Hall, on the top, are so long and steep that one staff member calls them "heart attack stairs."

In the office at the Healy building, conversations often are carried out in total silence by the flying fingers and the beautifully expressive gestures of sign. Indeed, the whole school is quiet in comparison to a public school. The silence is punctuated by bells and shouts in the halls as classes change.

Wayne Dietz, 26, who teaches math in the high school division says his hearing impairment does cause him some difficulty. Some students can

Samuel James

hear better than he can and he doesn't always know when they are disrupting the class. He also must rely on students to clue him in when the school bell or fire alarm rings. Dietz says, "I've always loved to teach children. I can also teach college students and at public school where there are deaf children. But I'd rather teach here."

He believes that deaf students learn faster from a deaf teacher and look up to deaf teachers as models. He says his students often ask him about the future—what kinds of jobs are available and how to get along in the world. "They ask me how to cope with problems in the classroom and in the dorms," he went on. "And how to study and how to improve themselves. I suggest things and show them examples."

Providing models for the deaf students is a conscious policy of VSDB. The bulletin boards are filled with magazine and newspaper articles reporting the accomplishments of people who are deaf.

Both Dietz and his interpreter, Frank Kent, agreed that deaf teachers at the school have more rapport with deaf children than hearing teachers. Kent says, "I agree; I've always felt that deaf teachers had a lot of advantages over a lot of hearing teachers because they know what to expect. Deaf teachers are better able to understand some of the kids' problems because they've been through them."

The VSDB experience does not suggest that every deaf education program must have only deaf teachers. Deaf children need exposure to the full range of human experience, which includes hearing adults and children. What the VSDB experience does suggest is that a program of deaf education which does not include deaf teachers is incomplete.

"I JUST DO THINGS A DIFFERENT WAY"

Public Schools
Seattle, Washington

People who believe in themselves tend to succeed in what they do, no matter what conditions may affect their lives. Just as children of the poor can lift themselves out of poverty, persons who are handicapped can succeed in special education, the regular classroom, or the community at large.

Barbara Yeager, a legally blind teacher at McClure School in Seattle, Washington, exemplifies the person who has the self-confidence and drive to succeed in anything she tries whether it is teaching, community work, politics, public speaking, or the creation of a school for women in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Yeager believes that disabilities are conditions that a person must deal with and overcome. Her personal philosophy, which she tries to impart to her students, strongly opposes the idea that the blind and other handicapped should be protected and kept out of the social mainstream.

"People have been going to public school in wheelchairs for eons," she says. "It's not the fact that they're in wheelchairs, but their attitude and emotional adjustment that counts. If they could walk around and run around, they might still be where they are. It's easy to blame the handicap."

Yeager's view is shared not only by many of the persons interviewed in this study, but by others who are handicapped and by those who work with and supervise them. They contend that a person who has dealt emotionally with their handicapping condition can be very effective in teaching. Like many of the individuals who are profiled here, Yeager exudes self-confidence in her ability to do her job well and to take care of herself in all situations.

She is as uncompromising in her efforts to prepare her students for life in the seeing world as she is in confronting possible prejudices she finds in her daily encounters with others: "The students have to learn what they need for vocational reasons," she says. "If they learn that they can't do something, that attitude will carry into their jobs some day."

For example, Yeager encouraged one blind high school student to compete in wrestling with the regular high school varsity team rather than with other blind boys. In addition, she urged the boy to learn to travel on the city's public transportation systems. At times, she concedes, the experience was very difficult for the student, but he learned to take care of himself and to build his self-esteem.

Yeager clearly believes that she can do what she wants to do, and she proves it. She works in local party politics and with the League of Women Voters. "I learned the art of public speaking and how to get along with people—things the young teacher needs."

She feels that her public activities undoubtedly helped her get a job as a teacher in the Seattle public schools, which have not hired many handicapped individuals. "I had proved that I could do a job. I never thought of myself as different. I guess I wasn't."

Yeager's classroom is quiet and well-organized. The high school students work quietly on projects and assignments. Yeager is assisted by an aide and uses materials and equipment that are appropriate to the education of the blind. She says she has no problems in carrying out her

classroom functions because of her legal blindness. "Teaching blind children is the same as teaching anybody else," she declares. "It's all a matter of philosophy and materials."

Materials have to be in braille or on tape for Yeager and in braille or large type for her students. The school has equipment that can blow up maps, charts, and other materials to a size large enough to be seen by students who are partially sighted. "I just do things a different way," Yeager says. "It's all a matter of adaptation. Blindness is the easiest handicap to overcome."

At McClure school since 1971, Yeager, who is a resource teacher, teaches "anything and everything," including math, English, and social studies to junior high school students. "My job," she says, "is to take students where they are and equip them with skills so they can participate fully in the regular classroom. If I were a perfect teacher, I wouldn't have a job."

Most of her students take a regular course load in the classroom and come to Yeager's resource room for special help in areas of difficulty. But the partially sighted and blind are not the only students who ask Yeager for assistance. "Many kids come in here to get help in math because I'm not as threatening as some other teachers. I find kids come floating in here because I'm available. I stay here until five o'clock."

After five, Yeager boards a bus for an hour and a half ride to her home in Edmonds, a community on the Puget Sound, north of Seattle. She makes the trip every day.

Yeager strongly believes that blind children should learn from an early age that they can participate fully in a seeing society. Sometimes that is hard to do: "It makes the public feel good to do something for someone else. There are a lot of laws and welfare departments to take care of handicapped people. The system tends to keep you in your place. That makes it hard to break out.

"And that's why I like to work with blind students. In Seattle, we took the blind students out of the schools for the blind. Then we got into certain situations in many homes where parents stifled their children's creativity and independence. Our problem actually is the parents' attitude. What we really need is early education of the parents."

Asked if she thought there was any advantage in hiring handicapped individuals to work with handicapped children, Yeager replied with an emphatic, "Absolutely," although she added quickly that the benefits would depend on the person who was doing the teaching. She says, "I remember as a child looking carefully at successful blind people in the State of Washington and around the nation. I looked at their careers and wrote them letters so I could decide what I wanted to do." She summarizes her position: "Everyone is limited in one way or another. We all have our pluses and minuses. One of mine is that I am blind."

In this, she is in accord with Sanda Farlinger, 24, a partially sighted teacher who works with preschool and kindergarten students at Hay Elementary School. Farlinger, who is in her first year of teaching, says, "I hope people will expect the same of me as they do of anyone else. I don't think of myself as handicapped *per se*. I have the same expectations of my children, within limits, as I would with any other children.

"I look at it as strengths and weaknesses; we all have them. I remember giving a talk when the question of handicaps came up. I said everyone in the room had them. 'Not me, not me,' several people said. I said we all have strong and weak points; that's what handicap means."

Farlinger believes her seeing problems make her more empathetic with the young, visually-impaired children in her classroom. "I try to impress on them that they are normal children," says Farlinger, a product of public schools. Her parents would not "let me use my visual problems as a crutch" and she tries to follow the same approach with her own pupils.

Because of her limited vision, Farlinger says there are three problems she must deal with, but she is totally confident that she can handle them. First, she needs to live close to her place of work because she cannot drive, meaning she must work in cities with public transportation systems. Many programs for the visually handicapped are staffed by itinerant teachers and though she served as an itinerant teacher while student teaching, the transportation problem was hard to overcome.

Second, Farlinger thinks people want to be overly helpful. When the staff at Hay School heard she was visually-impaired, members thought that meant she was totally blind. "They did not know whether to offer help or not. Frankly, I don't need any help."

Finally, she cannot do visual work for concentrated periods of time or read music. "I have to space out my reading," Farlinger explains.

"When I had to work with graphs in college, it just about did me in. I took three times as long as anybody else." However, there is a minimal amount of academic work with the young children in her class. "We're not working much with academics," she says. "We spend more time on teaching self-care."

While Seattle is open to hiring persons who are visually limited, the deaf and hearing-impaired have a much more difficult time finding work. Deaf persons who want to teach in special education must do student teaching in the regular classroom, according to Gary Hammons and Marsha Fankhauser, who are supervisors of special education teachers. Fankhauser says there were two deaf employees in the special education program in 1976-77. One has returned to college for an advanced degree and may be hired back as a teacher.

One deaf employee of the Seattle school system is Peggy Dixon, a tutor of the deaf at Roosevelt High School. Since the spring of 1976, Dixon has been working one-to-one with high school students. She raised her own children and worked in a bank before taking her present job. She believes that her deafness helps in her work with deaf students and that she has empathy for and patience with students who have difficulty with learning because of their hearing limitations.

According to Fankhauser, while the deaf may be more adept at communication and more empathetic with deaf children, they may have problems with the supervisors. "If a principal has something that should be communicated to the deaf person in private, the need for an interpreter may inhibit the interchange," Fankhauser explains.

Hammons and Fankhauser speculated on the limited number of handicapped persons who are working in special education. Hammons says, "Persons who are handicapped confront us with our own shortcomings. I think we tend to feel we ought to do a lot more than we do as special educators. So, subconsciously, we may steer away from someone who is handicapped."

From her own experience, Fankhauser believes that there are so few handicapped employees in special education because they are not accepted in the training programs. "The universities have tended not to accept or encourage the handicapped to go into special education. In my doctoral program at the University of Oregon there were 65 doctoral students. Not one of them had any limitation at all."

Fankhauser says she is disturbed that more people with handicaps are not working in special education. "As a staff member who works with the hearing-impaired, I really feel the need to know more deaf adults. How can we teach deaf kids if we, and they, don't know what deaf adults are all about?"

Carl Sulit

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"THEY CAN'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME"

From large metropolitan areas to small rural school districts, the story is the same: Handicapped individuals do not see their disabilities as preventing them from performing their jobs in special education. Many of these staff members say they only have to make some minor adjustments in the way they do things. Others report that they see no difference, in terms of performance, between themselves and persons who are not disabled.

At Winder Elementary School in Winder, Georgia, the assistant principal walks with the aid of braces and the visiting, itinerant teacher for the visually-impaired students is legally blind. Both men express confidence in their ability to do their jobs. This evaluation is seconded by John Peterman, principal of Winder, who says that the two employees get no special accomodations because of their disabilities.

Anderson Fraser, 33, the legally blind teacher, says his only problem is transportation. He cannot drive, so he must rely on others for rides to the three schools he serves. He pays the drivers the mileage allowance that he receives as an itinerant teacher.

Michael Lee, 35, Winder's assistant principal, who had polio at age six, asserts, "So far, I cannot say my handicap has held me back in any way." Lee serves as assistant principal to students in both regular and special education.

He was a teacher in a regular classroom for nine years before coming to Winder three years ago as assistant principal. He has coached junior varsity basketball for both boys and girls and has worked part time in a recreation department. "As far as my handicap goes, I'm very mobile," he says. "I am a deer hunter, a fisherman, and a boater. I get around as well as anybody. I imagine there are some 65-year-old administrators who couldn't keep up with me."

Barrow County, in which Winder is located, is about 40 miles from Atlanta, and 16 miles from its suburbs. According to Lee, the county's school system has about 4,500 students and 300 staff members. It supports six elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. The economy of the area relies on local industry, employment in Atlanta, and some truck farming.

Anderson Fraser serves as a teacher and consultant for three of the schools. He is employed and paid by the Northeast Georgia Cooperative Educational Agency (CESA). The agency provides services to districts which have a population base too small to do it themselves. Fraser, who lost his sight at the age of 26, works with students aged 3 to 18. He says he teaches everything, including academic subjects.

However, his primary responsibility focuses on dealing with the visual impairments of the students. He teaches braille and how to move about in a sighted environment.

"Most of the kids I work with are partially sighted," says Fraser, who is also partially sighted. "I help them with handwriting and adaptive kinds of skills, or with anything else they need to do. I'm there to serve the classroom teacher. I may even make suggestions about lighting in the classroom."

One of the reasons Fraser was hired was because of his physical disability. "They wanted someone to serve as a model," he explains. In addition to his visual condition, the fact that he was male also was considered in the decision to employ him. The other two CESA itinerant teachers are female and the agency wanted someone to serve as a male model as well as a visually-impaired model.

Fraser thinks hiring a handicapped person as a model will work "only under certain circumstances. If the person is well-adjusted, that's an important factor. An awful lot of them aren't. I know a lot of people will disagree, but

Winder Elementary School
Barrow County, Georgia

it's been my experience that a lot of people who are blind don't function real well. And they get jobs working with other handicapped people, and they don't do very well at it."

In addition, Fraser says, a lot of the visually-impaired students complain that the sighted teachers don't understand them. Children also sometimes try to take advantage of their handicap. "The kids can't play games with me like they can with sighted teachers."

All of the students with whom Fraser works are in regular classrooms. He believes his visual condition is an advantage in working with the classroom teachers. "Some of them were shocked to see me; I didn't fit their image at all," he chuckles. "But I can interpret better for them what to do with the kids. They tend to listen to me because I am an accredited teacher and have worked in the classroom."

Fraser was teaching in a regular classroom when his sight went bad about eight years ago. "I sort of backed into special education. I was going to school in Athens and got to know the people at CESA. They were eager to hire me."

However, this was not true of 140 other school systems he had written to when he felt ready to return to teaching. He told them about his certification as a teacher with six years of classroom experience and about his legal blindness. "Out of all of those systems, only one finally offered me a job. That was after school was open and they were desperate for a teacher. At that time it was legal to discriminate because of vision."

Fraser declares, "I'm going to go back to the regular classroom next year. I'm rather militant and I intend to be back in the regular classroom." With his drive, his determination, and with the law now on his side, one expects Fraser will be teaching in a regular classroom next year.

Samuel James

"YOU HAVE TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS"

Columbus was enjoying an interlude between the two blizzards that inundated the Midwest in the winter of 1977-78. Snow was nearly two feet deep everywhere. Four-lane streets were narrowed to three by cliffs of dirty snow, tossed up by snow removal equipment. Cars were still buried at curbside and a cold rain was creating small streams in many of the streets and highways.

At the Ohio State School for the Blind, some sidewalks still were covered with ice, and the parking lot was piled high with snow. Cars and busses inched around the school, even more slowly than usual. Inside, Carroll Jackson, the principal, was dealing with the effects of the weather. Staff members were having trouble getting to work, and Jackson had to make sure each classroom was covered. He was frank about some of the difficulties in employing the handicapped. "There have to be daily adjustments even in a school for the blind. This is still basically a sighted environment. On a day like today, it's hard for blind persons to get to work. We have to make adjustments to make sure all the classes are covered."

As principal, Jackson supervises several employees. He has no vision in one eye and is partially sighted in the other. He spoke of the adjustments that have to be made for him. "I rely heavily on sighted people to see things for me. I've had to make changes in my daily routine so that I can have time available for dictation and to have information read to me."

At age 30, Jackson may be the youngest principal of a residential school for the blind. Despite

Ohio State School for the Blind
Columbus, Ohio

his limited vision, he charges at top speed through the halls of the central building. Established in 1837, the Ohio State School for the Blind is the oldest state-supported residential school for the visually-impaired in the United States. Although the school serves the visually-impaired, a growing number of its students are multiply handicapped and mentally retarded. These new students have caused changes in the way the school does things. For years, the school emphasized academic subjects. But mainstreaming in the public schools has drained many of the most academically able students from the school, so it has begun a program of industrial technology and adapted its program to provide care for the physically impaired.

Jackson recognizes that accomodations must be made for teachers as well as himself. Teachers also need people to see for them from time to time. They may need readers to help grade examinations or aides to write out assignments on the board for students who are partially sighted. Jackson emphasizes his belief that a blind person cannot do every job in a school: "You have to make adjustments for teachers in elementary education who are blind. We expect art education to take place in the elementary classroom. If the teacher feels unable to provide the appropriate kind of experience, we need to shift responsibilities so art education can take place."

The visually-impaired staff members at Ohio State School for the Blind range from partially sighted to totally blind. Jackson believes assignments must be made on a case-by-case basis. For example, he says it would be wrong and dangerous to have a blind physical education teacher. He explains, "I feel uncomfortable when I supervise physical education. It's easy for a kid to get out of my range of vision and to get hurt without my knowing about it. Even as a principal who is visually-impaired, I would be very concerned about putting a visually-impaired person in physical education."

On the other hand, Jackson feels that in many academic classrooms, blind or visually-impaired people can be an asset and perform as well and sometimes better than a sighted person. "In academic classrooms, there is no problem," he says. "Visually-impaired people use braille as a reading medium. This puts them ahead of most normally sighted people in working with kids who also use braille."

Jackson turned from his discussion of the general issues of employing the handicapped to his own experience in education. Like many people interviewed for this project, his major hurdles occurred during his own educational experiences and early career. Handicapped people often find it difficult to find a place that will let them show what they can do and often they have to try harder to make the grade.

Jackson was extremely nearsighted as a child and he lost the vision of his left eye in an archery accident in third grade. Teachers and school officials became very nervous about his participation in certain activities, presumably because of liability claims that might be filed. The schools did not permit him to take physical education or

industrial arts or to compete in athletics, activities that were very important to him. He began having problems seeing in larger classes.

Finally, in seventh grade, a doctor recommended that Jackson attend the Iowa Braille and Sight-Saving School in Hinton, Iowa. It was the first time Jackson or his family had heard of the school. "A major problem for visually-impaired people is the lack of information on the part of principals and teachers in public schools about specific programs that are available," Jackson says.

When it came time to enter college, Jackson wanted to train to become an industrial arts teacher. Seven colleges turned him down because of his vision. "In the last college I applied to, I skipped over my impairment on the application. I enrolled in clases before they knew I had a problem. So I had an opportunity to demonstrate my ability in an industrial technology program. When I got my degree, it was time to find a teaching position. I mailed out 200 applications before I got one response that would even invite me for an interview."

Jackson was hired at a very small, consolidated public school system. Working all seven class periods of the school day, he taught electricity, crafting, auto mechanics, and agriculture. One of the conditions for hiring him was that he serve as assistant football coach, "even though I'd never had football pads on." He believes the school took advantage of the fact that he needed a job to load him down with work.

Carefully speaking from his experience as a teacher and administrator, Jackson believes that the question of whether a handicap is a benefit in teaching handicapped children depends on the individuals involved. It could serve as an inspiration to the students or they might think that the teacher could not get a job in a regular school or program. The Ohio State School for the Blind has nine visually-impaired teachers on a staff of 35. Overall, the school has 140 employees of whom 25 to 30 are visually-impaired. They include food service workers, house parents, custodians, and group and maintenance personnel.

"We've had visually-impaired people who were zeroes as teachers," Jackson declares. "Any organization has some dead wood." Teachers who work with the visually-impaired need some public school experience. They need to find out what normal kids are all about," he says. "There is a tendency to think our kids can do everything a normal kid of the same age can do. In fact, our kids are several years behind their chronological age."

A visually-impaired adult may or may not be a model for the visually-impaired child. Jackson says, "I've had parents tell me they were glad somebody was in the principal's office who knows what it means to be visually-impaired. They say their kids now can know it is possible to go to college and get a degree, even a Ph.D."

Jackson tells the following story with relish: Representatives from the state's civil rights office visited the school some time ago and demanded to know how many minority persons were employed. There was one Black teacher and 15 percent of the total staff were minority group members. The only place where minorities were lacking was on the teaching staff, even though Jackson stated that there was no way to hire them because they were not being trained. The state officials insisted that the school hire more minority people.

"We said, 'Look, how many blind people do you have in your office?' They didn't have any. 'How many handicapped people are there in your office?' They didn't know of any. We said that Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act includes handicapped people as a minority group. If we counted the handicapped people who were teaching for us as minorities, then 40 percent of our staff is in a minority group. We said we would consider adding more Black employees to our staff when they hired handicapped people in their office. At that point, they got up and left."

A member of that "40 percent minority" is Charles Whitman, who teaches industrial technology to high school students. He instructs his class in how to handle and use tools and how to take apart, repair, and reassemble various kinds of machinery and equipment. Whitman had completed two years of an industrial technology program at Ohio State University "before anybody even mentioned my visual condition. Then, an instructor said he felt he could not recommend me to teach industrial arts because of my impairment, unless I would teach other visually-impaired people. I pointed out that this was a ludicrous argument. I said more vision was needed to teach people with a visual impairment."

Despite the instructor's views, Whitman was hired to teach industrial arts at a public school in Delaware County, Ohio, where he taught for

seven years while running a part-time landscaping business. "I had no problems at all," Whitman declares.

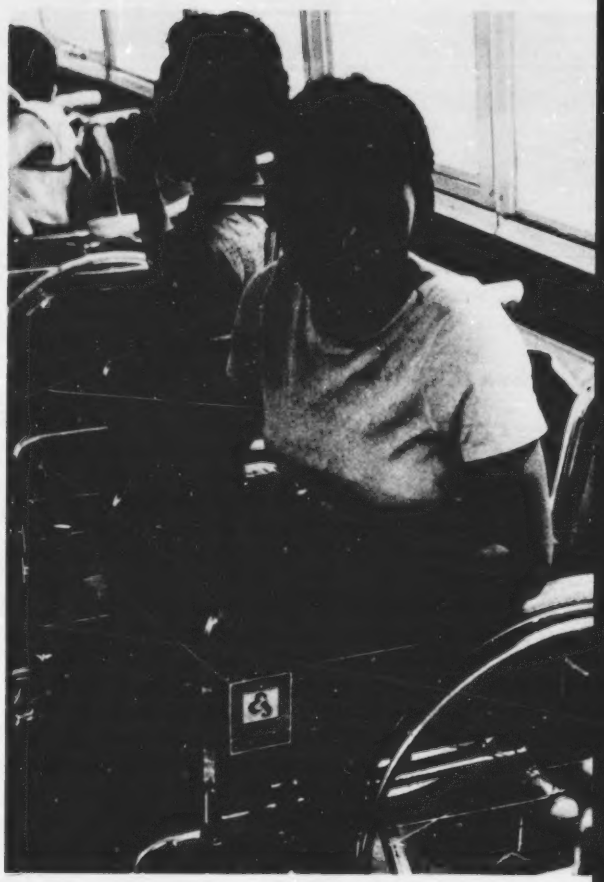
Whitman is partially sighted, so he is able to see the work that the students do in assembling and disassembling the equipment in the shop. Procedures for working with different tools and equipment are recorded for student use on cassette tapes that are neatly arranged in a rack covering one wall of Whitman's office. The title of each procedure is lettered on each cassette in braille.

As an industrial arts teacher, Whitman has less required reading than teachers in the academic classrooms and uses a magnifying glass to do necessary reading. He says he has to plan to use more time for some tasks than a fully sighted person needs.

One of the teachers of academic subjects is Donald Haines, who teaches elementary math and science. Haines is highly regarded by other teachers and the school's administrators. Several people felt that he is one of the best teachers on the staff. But his excellent abilities didn't make it any easier for him to get a job. He sent out hundreds of applications to public and private schools after completing college. The blizzard of applications yielded three interviews and one job offer, which was with the Ohio State School for the Blind.

Haines feels that a blind person faces two major problems in education—paperwork and discipline. "I have a fair ability at most parts of teaching. And I picked an area where paperwork was not overwhelming," he explains. Much of the work in the classroom is done in braille or large type although Haines occasionally hires a reader. "Sometimes I have students read their papers to me so we can proceed with their work immediately."

Haines is an alumnus of the school and a popular figure in Columbus. He leads a jazz group that plays every weekend at the Top of the Center, a well-known Columbus night spot. He thinks his musical ability may offer as much of a positive example for his students as the fact that he is a blind teacher. Attractive and articulate, Haines gives the impression that adjustments don't have to be made for him. Like many other employees, both sighted and nonsighted, he was working at his job on a day which the weather made one of the most miserable of the school year.



Carl Sulit

"LIKE ANY OTHER TEACHER"

To be handicapped often means working part time in special education. For a handicapped person, any job, no matter how limited the pay, may be preferable to not working at all. Indeed, the opportunity to make a contribution frequently seems as important as the salary itself.

Brian Altman, who has cerebral palsy, says his part-time job does not provide him with enough time to do everything that needs to be done. He works half time as a resource aide with multiply handicapped and mentally retarded children at the Dowling School, a special education facility in Minneapolis. Both his principal and his supervising teacher attest to Altman's ability. Indeed, both are encouraging him to return to college for the additional training he needs to become a teacher. Altman's only limitation as an aide, according to Laurelle Pearson, the teacher, is his inability to lift students who require intense physical care.

At Seward School, John Smith, who is hearing-impaired, was being paid for 20 hours a week as a resource consultant. At the time of the interview he was planning to leave the school system for a full-time job in the Minneapolis recreation program.

Though both of these men are highly regarded by their supervisors, there was no money available to pay them full-time. Smith was being paid with special funds and Altman started out being paid with on-the-job training funds from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. All aides at Dowling School work less than full time because of the budget problems of the city school system, Altman explains.

Both he and Smith were concerned because they did not have enough time to do what they felt needed to be done. Altman often stays at school beyond the time he is paid. "I simply enjoy the work," he says. "And I feel that if I make an effort to get here, the day will be more worthwhile if I stay for all of it."

The school building, designed to serve handicapped children, is fully accessible to Altman. Except for his inability to lift, Altman has no problems at work because of his disability. "Handicapped employees don't face any problems here simply because we modify the responsibilities to fit the abilities of the person," asserts Charles Marks, principal of Dowling School. Although Altman cannot provide physical care, he does many other tasks needed in a resource room that serves the handicapped.

Pearson, Altman's supervisor says, "Brian's not any less effective because of his handicap. With a lot of kids it's a plus factor. He relates to the kids on their physical level." Marks also contends that Altman provides the children with something that is needed by all elementary school children—a positive male model in the classroom. Altman performs a prodigious variety of jobs. Besides tutoring reading, mathematics, social studies, and creative writing, he helps set up and operate the audio-visual equipment. When Pearson and other teachers need typing, Altman does it. He also gives organ lessons to four students under supervision from the music teacher. Now in his fourth year at Dowling School, Altman, also a graduate of Dowling, works with children who are mentally retarded, and who have multiple handicaps, including cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy.

Altman's first major difficulty was getting and keeping his job, an experience shared by others interviewed for this project. After his first three months on the job, the on-the-job training funds were terminated. It was five more months before the principal was able to find other funds to pay Altman for 20 hours a week. After another three-and-a-half years, he's still being paid for only 20 hours a week. "Those first two years were really touch and go," Altman says. "I didn't know if I had a job or not."

His job also was threatened because of his

handicap. He had to take a physical examination from the city physician which turned out to be more *pro forma* than anything else. Then, the Minneapolis Civil Service Commission demanded that Altman be fired at one point, because "legally I wasn't eligible to work here." However, the principal fought for his right to keep the job.

Altman is one of four handicapped aides hired by Dowling School during Marks's tenure as principal: a wheelchair-bound aide (who has resigned to go back to college for a special education teaching certificate), a deaf aide, and a physically handicapped bus attendant.

John Smith, who was working part-time with hearing-impaired students and their teachers, took his job at Dowling after looking for full-time work for more than a year. The only problems he has had at work are bureaucratic ones; none are related to his hearing impairment. His job involves social work and counseling, part of which is trying to smooth relations between students who can not hear and teachers who can. "I think discipline problems have dropped 50 percent during the time I have been here," Smith said. In addition, he works with students and teachers to improve their communication skills, including sign language.

A written job description states that part of Smith's job is "to present a positive image of an adult person to hearing-impaired and hearing children by establishing a relationship with individuals and small groups. . .through academic, social, and recreational activities."

Smith is preparing to put his cheerful and friendly demeanor to work full time in a community center adjacent to the school. He will continue to work with the same children, but his salary will be paid by the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board.

Elaine Kamel, the first handicapped teacher to be hired by the Minneapolis public schools, is also planning to leave her job. Kamel, who works with mentally retarded students, has been a teacher at Emerson School since 1962. Although her mobility is impaired by arthritis, she does not use a wheelchair, crutches, or braces. But movement does cause her some difficulty.

Kamel is not leaving Minneapolis because of her disability. While traveling in Europe and Africa, she met the daughter of President Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya who invited her to return to Kenya. Kamel didn't know what she would do in Kenya, but thought it would be related to her skills and interests in working with the handicapped. An active, spritely, and outspoken person (head of the teachers' union at the school), she's bound to be missed. "Hi, I'm the token handicapped here," she greeted a visitor.

Both Kamel and Dr. Sajjad Haider, the principal of Seward School, stress that she is treated exactly the same as other teachers in the school. Haider says, "She is treated like any other teacher, going by all the rules and regulations that apply to the other teachers. She does not have any additional help because of her handicap. I have never treated her as a handicapped person when I assigned duties in the school."

Kamel speaks with a kind of perky pride in the fact that her classroom never was on the first floor of the aged three-story building, but on the third floor and until a few years ago, there was no elevator. It was installed, not for Kamel, but for children who are confined to wheelchairs. She simply struggled up and down the stairs every day. Most of the problems she experiences are connected with mobility—needing help to get on busses or dealing with icy sidewalks and steps. As a concession to her disability, she stays behind when her class goes on a field trip that requires a lot of walking.

She talks proudly of the program she and another teacher established for the mentally retarded 15 years ago, the city's first. "Fifteen

years ago, programs for the mentally retarded were zilch," Kamel declares. "We decided to take them swimming. And we took them out into the community to show them how to handle a bus, how to be mobile. The city now has two programs with federal money in which these kinds of activities are considered innovations."

In addition, she and her colleague created an outreach program in which they went into homes to instruct parents in how to teach their children. The program included classes on cooking and self-care, all elements that are part of regular programs for the mentally retarded today.

"I think I've had a positive effect in Emerson School," Kamel says. "I think I've educated a staff about what it means to be handicapped." In addition, she cites a letter she received from Dr. Arnold Rehman, director of special education, who urged her to return to the classroom after an operation while she was still confined to a wheelchair. "He said he wanted me to return to the school, despite the fact that I would be in a wheelchair," she says. "He wanted me to be a model for the staff and children."

Another handicapped employee of the Minneapolis special education program believes that it is up to the handicapped person to make the adjustments needed to work effectively. Clarissa Campbell is legally blind. She works as a speech therapist at the Mary McLeod Bethune School, evaluating the speech and communications skills of young children to determine if they need special services.

Campbell believes that her handicap worked to her advantage in getting the job because of the legal and political interest in employing the handicapped. "This is purely a feeling," she emphasizes. However, her disability has not always worked in her favor. Interviewers often would ask if she could handle the amount of reading that would be required. "My response was that if reading became an issue, it was my responsibility to hire a reader."

Campbell has not needed a reader in her current job, although she says, "The only problem I have is reading and writing reports. It takes me more time than other people. But it's not that much of a problem. My reading and writing of the reports seems no more or less delayed than anyone else's on the team." She grins as she offers the last observation, an allusion to the human tendency to procrastinate. She uses telescopic lenses to do her required reading. In addition, a secretary has volunteered to type rough drafts of material for Campbell, using a larger type font.

The strong impression given by the four handicapped employees of the Minneapolis special education program is that only minor modifications were needed to give them an opportunity for employment. They do not expect to be pampered, and would resent any attempts made to do it. Like other handicapped people, they seek only a chance to prove they can do a good job. Some sensitivity may be needed to their special needs. As with any person, some thought and care must be given to finding the most suitable job.

"SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL TO GIVE"

Carl Sulit

Public Schools
San Antonio, Texas

35

Like other teachers, the attitude of the handicapped affects how they perform in special education and how they relate to their students. However, they may be under closer scrutiny because they are handicapped and are expected to have problems.

"It's like hiring any other individual," says Tom Fordyce, principal of the Eloise Japhet School, which serves the physically handicapped children of San Antonio, Texas and 16 surrounding communities. "It seems like attitude is one of the most important ingredients. The question is, how do handicapped people perceive themselves?" Fordyce asserts.

He says that staff members at Japhet School who have disabilities "really aren't handicapped because they have a good attitude. They don't have any kind of negative view of themsevles. The kids relate to that." Fordyce cites Yolanda Flores, 37, who teaches math and science to second through sixth graders who are physically handicapped. "She's just an inspiration to her students," Fordyce declares. "They really do model after her. She's a real plus for the kids."

Flores, who had polio, says, "I hope I am a model for my students. Students who I taught are now in high school. One is thinking about going to SAC [San Antonio College], because I went there. Another is talking about going to Texas A & I because I went there."

Flores finds it easy to keep in touch with former students because Japhet serves grades kindergarten through 12. "If they have doubts, I encourage them. I know they can do it if they try," she says. Her continuing concern for her students grows out of her own experience. "I feel I can understand some of their problems because I've been handicapped since I was two and a half," she explains. "In many cases I can see why they are having certain problems or how they feel, because I've gone through that. It's easier to understand if you've been through it. Others can sympathize, but they really don't know what it's like."

Elizabeth Howe, 34, agrees. "I think people who are handicapped have something very special to give to others who are handicapped," says Howe, a dwarf, who has taught reading to second through sixth graders at Japhet for 11 years. One thing the handicapped person can give is an understanding of the struggle that a disabled person faces when trying to get a job. Howe wanted to be a librarian, but one college said she couldn't because she couldn't reach the books. Through perseverance and the support of the former principal at Japhet, Howe eventually became a librarian, began teaching art, and after receiving a master's degree, became a full-time teacher.

Flores also was discouraged in college from going into education. "The head of the department felt I wouldn't be able to get a job. They were a little reluctant to let me do student teaching. But they had to because I had all the prerequisites and my grades were okay." Flores taught sixth grade in a regular classroom and the school's principal said he would be willing to hire her if there was an opening.

However, she had graduated from Japhet and wanted to go into special education. She was hired on a trial basis, because the person who hired her didn't think she could handle a classroom.

"I don't think there are any problems that I can't handle," Flores said. Howe feels the same way, but has had to adapt her classroom somewhat to meet her special needs. For example, the custodial staff cut down the legs on her desk and built her a platform so she could reach the blackboards. "As far as work performance goes, employers should hire handicapped people because they're willing to go that extra mile," declares Howe. "If the handicapped person is qualified, she should be given the benefit of the doubt until she can prove herself."

Japhet School has given Julia Rangel, who stutters, a chance to work as a teacher's aide. Rangel has been working with severely retarded children since September, 1977. She teaches them self-care, gross motor development, and exercises.

Rangel says she does not find her speech difficulty a problem in working with the children. She says she doesn't stutter when she isn't thinking about talking. "If somebody asks me a question, I just tense up," she explains. She thinks she works well with the students because "I don't see them as handicapped. I see them as normal children, regardless of their condition. Since I started working here, I see kids who are good in math, and some are better at reading. It's just like public school. All can do something."

One reason Kathryn Halliday works with handicapped children is to help them prepare for life after school. "Opportunities for handicapped people are becoming more and more available," notes Halliday, 23, who had polio at the age of 13 months. With one leg paralyzed,

Halliday says she can't do much running and lifting, but she does feel effective in teaching self-care, motor development, and other skills to physically handicapped children. "I'm excited about this field," she says. "It's new. I'm excited to see what is being done and what is being offered to handicapped people."

Halliday believes it is important for special education teachers to have public school experience because it provides a sense of perspective. "You've got to have a referant, because these 'normal' children are the majority. You've got to know the difference because these handicapped kids are going out into the world. These handapped kids need to know what they're facing. They need a combination of a realistic and optimistic attitude."

Halliday's optimism is unrepressed. But because of her own handicap, she also is realistic about what is needed. "It's almost automatic to want to do things for them," she says of her students. "But it's better to let them try. Let's see if they can do it."

San Antonio is a flat city straddling the San Antonio River. Spanish architecture battles with fast food jungles along the streets and highways. The downtown area is dominated by the Tower of the Americas that was left behind by the Hemisfair world exposition. On the fringe of the city, near the belt highway, is the Otto A. Pfeiffer School, which many of the deaf children of San Antonio attend.

At Pfeiffer, a vibrant Mexican-American boy salutes a visitor and reaches out to shake his hand. He is obviously a leader, because several other children follow suit. He repeats the performance until it is time for recess, when he bolts for the playground and the rest of the children follow to the beat of their own internal drummers.

Toni Pompa, 23, their teacher, is in her second year at Pfeiffer School. Pompa is one of those rare people whose disability has been improving. Now, her hearing is only slightly impaired because she has had corrective operations. "I have a fairly normal right ear and am hard of hearing in my left ear," she explains with a smile. "I do feel I understand what it's like to be hard of hearing. I'm teaching a hard of hearing class and can see they are going through the same things I did.".

Margaret Adams, head of the deaf program, believes that all of her deaf or hard of hearing teachers "are an asset to our program. They have a special empathy for the children. They have strong classroom management skills and can see the day-to-day problems deaf students have."

Shirley Kelley and Connie Perez, supervisors, emphasized the importance of having deaf teachers as models for the students in the hearing-impaired program. Kelley added, "They expect more of the students than a hearing teacher and they get more. They enforce very strict language discipline."

In most deaf programs, teachers who are deaf seem to have less of a problem communicating and relating to students than hearing teachers. This is true of Pompa, Wilma Evans, Joanne Jacobs, and Nancy Slasor, all of whom teach in the deaf program at Pfeiffer School. Each of them dismissed the question of difficulty with a few words and a wave of the hand. Jacobs chuckled when asked if there were any benefits to being deaf. "I can't hear my children fighting at home." she quipped. She went on, "I think I do relate better because I understand what they need. And they understand that I'm trying to help them develop personal responsibility."

Slasor agreed, but added, "I don't want to say only a deaf teacher can understand a deaf child's problem. Hearing teachers can understand also. And the children do need a variety of influences." Her point is one that has been emphasized by many administrators. Fordyce, for example, stressed the need to expose handicapped children to a gamut of influences and experiences. And children in regular classrooms also need exposure to the full variety of human experience and the human condition, including many handicapping conditions.

"GOOD RAPPORT WITH THE KIDS"

Sullivan County Elementary School
La Porte, Pennsylvania

Sullivan County is part of a poor, rural section of northeastern Pennsylvania, covered with forested mountains. The main industry is tourism—hunting in winter; fishing, camping, and boating in the summer. Many residents travel out of the county to work. La Porte, site of the county's elementary school, has a population of 200.

Eric Sampson loves the county and the children he teaches. At 25, Sampson is in his fifth year of teaching a class of educable mentally retarded students, aged six to 13. Sampson, who has no central vision at all, is legally blind. But he can read with a magnifying glass and eye glasses. He says most of his students are mainstreamed in regular classes on an individual basis, depending on each child's needs and abilities. He teaches them reading, mathematics, and language arts.

Although located at the school, Sampson is an employee of something called BLAST 17, an intermediate unit, which pays his salary and provides him with supplies. BLAST stands for the four counties it serves—Bradford, Lycoming, Sullivan, Tioga. In Pennsylvania, intermediate units, like BLAST, offer services such as special education to small, poor school districts.

"When I first started teaching," Sampson says, "my major concern was discipline. My concern arose from the fact that kids will be kids; once they found out I couldn't see clearly, I thought they would try to get away with things." The problem never materialized, either in student teaching or in Sampson's five years in Sullivan County. On the contrary, the students in his classroom go out of their way to be helpful to Sampson and to their classmates. This was noted by James Weaver, the principal, who says, "Problems? Not at all. As a result of their awareness of Eric's disability, the children help each other a great deal. If one child doesn't know a word, another will raise his hand and give the answer." Weaver adds, "I would most definitely give Eric an outstanding rating as a teacher."

Sampson thinks the children's helpfulness may result partly from their awareness of his handicap and partly from his teaching style. "I never asked the kids for help in this area, I run a structured but friendly classroom. I emphasize cooperation and delegation of responsibility... I do believe I have better rapport with the kids because they have a problem and I have a problem. I've faced the same things they have. This helps my rapport with the kids."

However, he does not believe that he is a model for the children because he also has a disability. Sampson thinks the children are too young and their mentality is too low to make the connection that because he has a handicap and is successful they can be also.

Neither Weaver nor Sampson expressed any concern about Sampson's ability to handle discipline problems or to take care of the children in all situations. Sampson serves playground duty just as regularly as the other teachers, supervising the playground activities of his own class and of the regular fifth and sixth grades—more than 100 children. "I keep moving and try to cover areas where I think there might be problems," Sampson says. "There have been no difficulties."

The school facility presents no problems. Because of fluorescent lighting, Sampson can make use of most of the vision he possesses. "The older type of lights might have posed a problem," he says.

Sampson reports that he failed one course in college because the professor wrote the test on the blackboard and refused to let Sampson take it separately. After an appeal to the dean, the grade was changed to a D. The professor had thought Sampson was trying to get out of the test. He knew a blind student was in class, but failed to make the connection with Sampson.

Sampson has established a very solid connection in the classroom and in Sullivan County. His impressive record shows that a person who is visually disabled can work effectively with active children and in a community that does not provide a lot of support services for the blind.

"I DON'T FEEL ANY LIMITATION"

James Johnson Elementary School
Charlottesville, Virginia

What is a handicap? This question emerges dramatically in a study such as this one. Is it enough to be without one limb, or must a person be more seriously disabled? People who have a wide range of impairments do not consider themselves handicapped. Nor are they so considered by their colleagues and supervisors. Indeed, they function as well as people who have no perceptible limitations.

Patricia Bottom teaches children with learning disabilities at the James Johnson Elementary School in Charlottesville, Virginia. Born without a leg, she wears an artificial limb in place of the portion of the left leg below her knee. The children in her classroom are as active and full of energy as any children in a regular classroom. Some of them, because of their frustrations in trying to learn material that is very difficult for them, are perhaps more active and prone to emotional outbursts and misbehavior.

Bottom handles the class with confidence and agility. Indeed, she exhibits only a slight, scarcely noticeable limp. "It took me several weeks before I knew which was the artificial leg," says Carolyn Roth, a student teacher under Bottom's supervision.

Winter was receding on the bright, sunny day Bottom was interviewed in mid-March. It was Roth's last day of student teaching, and the students were having a good-bye party. Bottom and an aide bustled about, cleaning up the dishes as the ten-year-olds hurried off to catch their school busses. Bottom brought me a cup of coffee and reflected on the question of whether her condition caused her any difficulty in teaching. Although she expressed her opinions forcefully, Bottom took time to consider each question and to turn it over carefully as she answered it.

"I don't think so," she responded. "I don't think of myself as handicapped in the sense of being limited in any way." Roth interjected, "The other day there was a volley ball game between the teachers and the fifth graders. Pat went out to play with them. I stayed inside."

Bottom laughed and commented that she likes to play softball and basketball with her pupils. In addition, she swims, skis, and water-skis. A divorced mother, she is busy raising her own three children, with whom she goes on camping trips. None of these activities seem unusual to her.

"I was blessed with having a protective and supportive mother and father who urged me again and again to challenge my limitations. He [her father] strongly insisted that I be on the swimming team with my sister. It felt unfair. The other kids could do a racing dive of 10 or 15 feet. I had to start from a standing position. My father said that if I was really interested, I'd have to try harder. It was the stock answer I got from him."

Bottom was not certain that the fact she has a physical disability is any benefit in teaching children with learning disabilities. "I don't think so," she mused. "It's a hard question to answer, because it depends on the circumstances and is so strongly influenced by the individual personality." Roth commented, "I think the element of perseverance is not something that everybody has. Sometimes someone else might say, 'Is it fair to expect this person to learn to read?' How would you answer that question, Pat? I expect you would say, 'Let's do it a different way.' I think you take your perseverance for granted."

Bottom summarized her view of herself: "I think of the handicapped person as someone who has to do something special. I'm blessed by my prosthesis. It gives me some degree of flexibility and lack of limitation. I don't feel any limitation."

"IT WAS CLEAR WHAT THE REASON WAS"

Special Projects
Palm Beach County, Florida

Carl Sulit

Today, with shrinking enrollments and dwindling financial resources in the schools, handicapped people have additional hurdles to leap in finding jobs in public education. Though the law and public attitudes are shifting, there are fewer positions to be filled. These days most aspiring teachers have to send their resumes out in batches, the common practice for years among individuals who are handicapped.

Furthermore the number of applications submitted to dozens of school systems is no guarantee of a job for the handicapped person. Donna Batelaan wanted to teach, but never got a teaching job. She was hired by the Palm Beach County School system in Florida to carry out a research project supported with federal funds. When that work was completed, she was retained to head the special project that resulted from the research. If not for this, she might still be outside of public education, in spite of a great deal of effort and determination.

Batelaan who had polio in 1954, uses a wheelchair to move around. After receiving a B.A. degree in 1971, she tried to get a teaching job with several public schools in Florida. They all turned her down. Then she obtained a master's degree in special education, and tried again for a teaching job. Still no success. She taught in private schools and in public adult education classes which both paid her less than a regular public school teaching job.

Batelaan says she was given several reasons why she was not hired when she first applied for a job. A major one was the concern of school officials who felt that she would not be able to handle the children. "I then earned my master's

degree in special education and tried to find employment as a teacher," she says. "This time it was clear what the reason was that I did not get hired." She says her physical disability has kept her from employment as a teacher in either regular or special education programs in the public schools.

Batelaan has had to fight resistance from the educational system ever since she had polio. Fortunately, she had the support of her parents. They wanted her to return to public elementary school, even though the principal was reluctant to enroll her. "He let me in on a trial basis and I made it," she declares. The same experience was repeated in high school—reluctance to admit her, admission on a trial basis, proving herself, and then, full-time admission.

Resistance did not end with graduation from high school. "When I started thinking about college, I wrote to 17 different schools," Batelaan says. "Two schools said, 'Maybe,' and the rest said, 'No way.'" She attended Alma College in Michigan for two years, completed her undergraduate work at the University of Illinois, and received her master's degree in special education at Florida Atlantic University.

Batelaan currently serves as the director of special projects, Palm Beach County Public Schools. Her job grew out of a year-long research project in which she investigated how handicapped children were being served by public and private agencies. The study focused on gaps in the present services and the need for additional services. It also resulted in a long report to the school system's advisory council on the handicapped and was responsible for her current job.

She works on a project which is supported with federal vocational education funds and has several focuses. One is to locate children who are not being served and match them with agencies that provide the needed services. The project also offers teacher training and staff development to increase the awareness of school system employees of the needs of handicapped youngsters.

For Batelaan, access to buildings is the major problem she faces in her work. She is required to attend many meetings. Although she is fully mobile in a wheelchair and can drive an automobile, she can't get her wheelchair into many of the buildings because they have not been adapted for use by handicapped persons. "We've had to reorganize to get people to come to where I can get in," Batelaan says.

Generally, Batelaan believes she has received needed support and cooperation from those with whom she works, but she does sense some resistance and resentment because of her disability and her job. She says some people don't want to take the time and effort needed to attend meetings at a place of her convenience. And some people are resistant to her project.

"There always is some resistance to change," Batelaan says. "People complain, 'How can we do these things when we already are doing so many other things?' Or, 'How can you ask us to take on something else when we already have too many youngsters and not enough resources?'" However, Batelaan believes that her exposure in the school system and the community have helped to erode the resistance to her and to the idea of doing more for the handicapped. Like many of the people interviewed for this study, Batelaan is active in the community (for example, she works for consumer advocacy groups) and her involvement has added to her visibility and effectiveness.

"In some ways my handicap does make a difference for the better," Batelaan says. "I've heard feedback that I'm an example of what can be done by a disabled person who has the right kind of equipment, training, and opportunities. This has given me a certain amount of credibility in my work. I am an example that people are talking about."

At work in Batelaan's case is the operative concept or the "opportunity" for handicapped persons to show that they can do the job. To some degree, the stereotypes are self-perpetuating. If a school system believes the stereotype that a handicapped person cannot perform effectively, then the system will never hire a person who can challenge the stereotype by doing a good job.

"A COOPERATIVE ACTIVITY"

People with handicaps become adept at finding different ways to do things. If their condition limits their ability to do the job one way, they find alternative methods of doing the same job. If necessary, teachers who are blind hire readers or those who can't drive find ways to become itinerant teachers by using public transportation or finding rides with someone.

Two physically handicapped employees of the Crippled Children's Hospital School in Jamestown, North Dakota, learned that their students often were willing to lend a hand when it was needed. Anne Carlsen, director of the school, was born without hands and is a quadruple amputee. Roger Arneson, a teacher, lost the use of both of his hands to cerebral palsy. Both have relied during their long careers in education on students to do their writing for them in the classroom.

Carlsen no longer teaches, but she follows the same principle of using somebody else's hands when needed. "Administration is great for anyone who is physically handicapped; you can tell others what to do and not have to move around," she chuckles. Except for two years in graduate school, Carlsen has been with the school since it opened in 1941 and was a teacher until 1950, when she became its director.

A woman of high spirit and good humor, Carlsen recalls that most of her difficulties with employment in education occurred at the outset of her career. "I figured it was something I could do because I could talk. I thought I had a fair amount of brains, and my sister and two brothers were in education. I knew something about it."

But, Carlsen says, "I had a real nice advisor who said I'd never get a job because so many teachers were looking for jobs. This was 1934, the depth of the Depression." Other career ideas were explored and dropped. Social work was rejected because at the time social workers went into homes and had to drive. She was turned down for training as a librarian, because she couldn't shelve books, which was part of the training. "I said shelving books was not what I planned to do. But the head of the department said it still was part of the training program. He said he wouldn't admit me to the library school."

She took a lot of writing courses and tried unsuccessfully to get a job in publishing after graduation, managing to make a living by helping her sister run a tea shop and by editing manuscripts for a former college advisor. "I was determined to support myself and be independent," she recalls.

When the Crippled Children's Hospital School was started by the Lutheran Hospital and Home Society of America, Inc., a former professor suggested that Carlsen apply for a teaching job. "They didn't ask me if I was prepared to teach. I'd never had a teaching course," says Carlsen. But she went ahead and taught, and eventually acquired a teaching certificate by taking summer courses.

She was able to teach without assistance because the classes were small. "If something needed to be written on the board, I'd get somebody to do it for me. There were no teacher's aides then. I started for $25 a month and room and board. I was really thrilled. They gave me a break and I loved teaching."

Carlsen, whose secretary and receptionist are both confined to wheelchairs, says she has no difficulty in carrying out her administrative duties. Most of her work can be done verbally by telephone or dictation. She lives in an apartment at the school with a companion.

Roger Arneson, a graduate of the school, has taught science and mathematics for 18 years. In addition to not having use of his hands, he is confined to a wheelchair. Carlsen and Vern Fleming, the principal, give Arneson high marks as a teacher. "Roger is an excellent teacher; he's really sharp and has a real good mind," Fleming says.

The school presents no barriers to handicapped employees because it was designed for physically handicapped children. Because of the fearsome North Dakota winters, the school's

The Crippled Children's Hospital School
Jamestown, North Dakota

facilities are under one roof. It is all on the ground level and ramps are used where changes in elevation must be negotiated. Sturdy wooden rails line the hallways, and all doors are wide enough for wheelchairs and open easily. Drinking fountains and restroom fixtures are accessible to everyone. "It's a good place to work," Arneson says.

He explains that his major difficulty in teaching is his inability to use his hands, since he cannot write on the board or grade papers by himself. "I've always thought of teaching as a cooperative activity. If there are some things I can't do physically, there are always one or two in the class who can do them. If I need something written on the board, I can find someone to do it. Students also help by correcting tests." Arneson also is assisted by audio-visual equipment, aides, and student teachers.

The major concession to Arneson's disability, according to Fleming, is that he is not assigned to classes during first period. This gives him a little more time to get to work, if he needs it, or he may use the time for his office work.

Fleming says he's not influenced by factors that some school systems have given as reasons for not hiring the handicapped. In emergencies, assistance must be provided for all 95 children, all of whom have physical disabilities. "If there's a fire, we'll have somebody get Roger out of there," Fleming says.

Like Carlsen, Arneson wanted to be a teacher. He says he was able to walk and use his hands when he graduated from college. However, he couldn't get a job teaching in public schools. "When I first got out of college, I was determined to try public school teaching," he recalls. "I suppose I must have made a couple of hundred applications to various schools in North Dakota, Minnesota, and other places, too. I was fairly honest about telling them about my disability. Maybe I was too honest. I never got an answer to about 85 percent of those applications. They just weren't willing to give me a chance to prove myself, I guess."

Most of the other schools replied that the positions for which Arneson had applied were filled. He was offered only two or three interviews, one of which he particularly remembers. He traveled with an uncle to a small school system in North Dakota. After the interview, he was told to wait in the hall. "They never did tell me that I was not going to be hired," Arneson says. "They told my uncle." The reason: The school board thought he would have trouble with discipline. Arneson shook his head. "They didn't have the guts to tell me to my face," he said.

His first job at the Crippled Children's Hospital School was part-time, but it evolved into a full-time job. He has not found discipline to be much of a problem at the school. "I've found that almost 100 percent of the kids are there because they want an education. They seem a little bit different from kids in public school who are there because they have to be."

Arneson thinks his handicap serves as a model or an inspiration for his high-school age students. "Over the years, some of the kids have asked me, 'What did you do to get in this position?'" he says. "I would hope that my experience would be an example for the students."

Carlsen and Fleming believe that handicapped teachers can be negative as well as positive role models. Carlsen has had teachers who served as excellent examples for the children. "I've also had some teachers who I hoped the children would not choose as models."

According to Carlsen, the school "gives preference to hiring handicapped persons if they can do the job. It can be a little more difficult in the lower grades, because the kids often do need quite a bit of physical help." Due to limited turnover, the school has a small number of vacancies for which it receives a large number of applications. Often, the applicants have no experience or training in either education or special education. "I really feel the teachers here have to do their jobs," Carlsen says. "Our kids need to be prepared to go to college. They need a good education."

"YOU HAVE TO BE REALLY ON THE BALL"

Public Schools
Boston, Massachusetts

Disabling disease and injury can strike a person at any time of life. Some people are born with disabling conditions, while others may experience them at the peak of their careers. Sometimes people can return to their original positions after such experiences, and sometimes they cannot.

For Robert O'Brien, it may have been a combination of disabling conditions that prevented him from returning to high school teaching. O'Brien, 33, was a teacher in the Boston public schools when he suffered a gunshot wound in the head. The wound deprived him of the use of his legs and decreased the quickness of his mental capacity. O'Brien, who now works in the Home and Hospital Division of the Boston Public Schools, helps the director of the division keep track of media materials, organizes them, makes them available to teachers and students who need them, and does "anything else that is needed."

O'Brien's injury occurred in 1974. After spending two years in the hospital, he felt recovered enough to return to teaching. "It was disastrous," he recalls. "I was no longer quick enough mentally to keep up with the high school kids. I don't know how it is in other school systems, but in Boston you really have to be on the ball. And you have to be physically able with that age group to handle potential discipline problems."

O'Brien feels he will never know if he could have handled teaching from a wheelchair, if the accident had not affected his mental capacity. "I guess my situation is unique," he says. He works on the seventh floor, which is accessible to his wheelchair. "I don't have any problems here, except reaching things in the top cabinets. . . . I'm only affected on this job by my physical limitations. I can't do anything involving the use of my legs. Standing up is out of the question."

He states, "The men and women who work here are tremendous to me. They're always willing to help me. I usually leave between three and three-thirty. One day the elevators went out after I left. A woman who works in the speech and hearing department said all she could think of was how I would get downstairs." Emergencies have been prepared for, according to O'Brien. "The firemen and police have a complete list of everybody in the building. This would be the first department they would come to in case of fire. They'd simply carry me downstairs."

Carl Sulit

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"IF WE DON'T HIRE THE HANDICAPPED,

For many handicapped persons, life after graduating from school is a dead end. They wind up in a sheltered workshop, a residential facility, or living with relatives in society's shadows, the vital life of work and the community is often closed to them. This has been particularly true for the mentally retarded.

East Baton Rouge Parish's public schools are trying to change that. The schools have mounted a work-study program to train retarded students to work in business, industry, local government, and the schools. In addition, persons with physical handicaps are employed in Baton Rouge's regular and special classrooms. "Our philosophy is to try to put the handicapped to work," says Irene Newby, special education supervisor for Baton Rouge. "We are saying to employers that handicapped people can be employed successfully. If we don't set an example, I don't see how we can expect others to hire our graduates. There are several handicapped people in our system who are working with handicapped children. I know of a teacher with one arm and one leg; another is confined to a wheelchair; and another is legally blind. One of our speech therapists is epileptic."

Within special education, three legally blind teachers are working with physically handicapped children. "Our first requirement is that the teachers be qualified," Newby says. "But in special education we certainly would hire a handicapped person before a nonhandicapped person if their qualifications were at the same level."

In late December 1977, the room in Westdale Elementary School was decorated for the holiday season. The children were gathered around a table for a reading lesson. Some had pulled up to the table in wheelchairs and others were perched on straight backed chairs. Except for wheelchairs, braces, and crutches, it was like a regular classroom. Melva M. Watrous, their legally blind teacher, listened intently while the children read.

Watrous says she has to "sit and observe" children much more closely than other teachers. Learning about the children from their body posture, movement, and tone of voice, she can identify pages in reading books by the position of the pictures on each page. "I've almost memorized some of the books," she says. "I do a lot of verbal activity with children also. But that's not because of my eyesight. It's what the children need."

She concedes that she has to work extra hard to overcome difficulties she encounters in teaching. "Teaching does require more effort for me in planning activities and overseeing my classroom." Stressing that she has encountered no resistance or barriers from the school system or colleagues because she is legally blind, Watrous stated: "There were a couple of parents who wondered how effective I would be. I didn't see that as any problem. I had to let them find out for themselves. I think now that there is more or less enlightenment on their part. Not just anyone can be a teacher, sighted or not sighted."

She believes that her own experience as a visually-impaired person makes her more sensitive to the difficulties the children experience. Unlike some disabled teachers, Watrous deliberately uses herself and her experience as a model for her children. Her major concern is to gird the children against self pity. "I tell them that before you can get other people to accept you, you have to accept yourself. Some children are ashamed of their condition and they try to act as if it doesn't exist. "One boy stumbles and falls a lot because he goes too fast. I keep trying to

WHO WILL?"

Public Schools
East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana

Carl Sulit

slow him down. I demonstrate that when I go too fast, I run into something. I try to use myself as an example."

Gerard Scallan, the principal at Westdale, feels concern about Watrous only on assignment duty, because she is not able to see at a distance. However, the other teachers have been very cooperative in helping her during hall assignments. "I don't know how anybody could function more efficiently than Melva does," Scallan says.

Watrous is aided by Marie Broussard, who is deaf and mute. Broussard has worked for the East Baton Rouge Parish school system for 15 years. She enjoys working with children and has experienced no barriers because of her handicaps. Watrous explains that the major difficulty in working with Broussard is communication. Everything must be written down, because Watrous doesn't speak sign. "But I've found that once she knows what her job is she does it beautifully," Watrous says.

Broussard provides physical care for children who have little control over their bodies. She also corrects workbooks and helps with mathematics problems. Scallan is concerned about Broussard only in emergencies. "She might not be able to hear a plea for help," he says.

At another Baton Rouge School, the Arlington Vocational Center, the school busses were delivering loads of students. Suddenly loud, angry voices erupted in the hall. Mildred Terry, the petite, Black principal of Arlington, interrupted her conversation and headed into the hall to quell an altercation between two teen-aged students. It is in this setting that Acey Stewart, a slim, young, Black woman, works as an attendant with mentally retarded high school students every day. Stewart received her work-study and

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on-the-job training at the center and has worked there full-time since February, 1977. Principal Terry says, "Acey is doing a fantastic job."

Stewart is only one of many graduates of the Baton Rouge special education and work-study program for the mentally retarded who has found work in local schools, businesses, or government. Terry: "Our aides are responsible for carrying out their own jobs. They can't stand around thinking about what someone else isn't doing. Acey does her job and does it fully."

An attendant's duties generally are nonacademic. Often, students need one-to-one attention in going to the bathroom or to the lunchroom, Terry explains. Stewart takes care of the bulletin board, gets material ready for student activities, and helps out with field trips, on the playground, or at physical education classes.

Acey becomes the responsible adult in the classroom when the teacher, Cecilia Daley, has to go out. Acey also makes sure the children answer the roll call or she takes attendance herself when there is a substitute teacher. "I like working with kids," she says. "Each day I am learning something. I get a lot out of it."

Daley echoes Terry's high evaluation of Stewart: "She really works well with the kids and can take on responsibility. She's always thinking ahead. The children love her. To be honest, I've had aides who have been as good and others who have not been as good as Acey."

There has been little resistance in the schools to hiring mentally retarded aides, according to Jacques Brown, the work-study coordinator. "There was mild surprise when our graduates proved they could do the work. Once the teachers found that out, they were won over." Generally, the children in the classroom are not told that their attendants have been labeled mentally retarded. Brown wonders about the use of such labels. He feels that given a chance the so-called mentally retarded can make tremendous strides in developing their capacity for work and community life.

Indeed, the major problem that graduates of the work-study program face is lack of adequate public transportation. They often face enormous difficulties getting to work, says Blanche Snee, who serves a liaison function between the work-study program and employers. "Some of our graduates will ride miles on bikes or hitchhike in order to get to work," Snee says. (Stewart has overcome the problem by learning to drive and buying a car.)

Another graduate of the work-study program is James Dunne, who works as a custodian at Zion City Elementary School, which is located in Baton Rouge's poorer, predominantly Black district. Dunne, who is Black, has earned the respect and admiration of Alvin F. Decuir, the school's principal. "He's been dynamic," declares Decuir. "We are preparing to move him to the highest level of the custodial staff after the current supervisor retires."

A major employer of the work-study program's graduates is SEARCH, a private preschool center for the multiply handicapped and profoundly retarded. Children who leave this preschool go into special education programs in the public schools. SEARCH (Special Education and Retarded Children's Hope) is operated by the Baton Rouge Association for Retarded Children. Each classroom has a teacher, an assistant teacher, and a mentally retarded aide. Three of the aides are graduates of the work-study program. Three more students from the program are in training at SEARCH—two as aides and one in the lunchroom.

"We find the girls to be very effective with the children," says Brenda Pezzana, director of SEARCH. "Our major problem is with the parents of the girls who worry that they will not be able to handle all the assignments. We have parents call in and say. 'Don't let my daughter have bus duty.' We don't treat these girls as retarded," declares Pezzana. "We don't let them use that as an excuse. They are treated as employees and are expected to be at work on time and to do their work responsibly."

Carl Sulit

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A Personal Conclusion

My journey into the world of special education was more than a professional assignment. Although its purpose was to produce this report, this study also had deep personal meaning for me, based on the human contact and interaction I encountered. As in every human situation, the emotional and subjective elements were as significant as the intellectual and objective ones. I tried to be as objective as my professional background and training made possible; but an overflow of emotional occurrences inevitably colored my perceptions of the reality I was permitted to see.

The surface material here represents the facts upon which the conclusions are drawn. We often forget that there are other levels and areas of reality, which, if we could reach them, might warrant a different set of conclusions. For example, in a study such as this, most of the information is drawn from people's responses to a set of questions, plus my personal, "objective" observations.

The data on which this study is based is a series of field notes on one slice of the educational habitat. To draw grand conclusions about the employment of the handicapped in education from this limited material would be like expounding on the life of all birds from a study of birdlife in a single marshland. Nothing could be said about birds that live in the jungle, the tundra, or on the beaches.

One never knows for sure why a request for an interview is granted or denied. Decisions not to participate in this study may have been based as much on political and emotional considerations as on objective criteria. Why, for example, did an official in City A refuse to take part in the study after at first seeming to welcome it? What reason did an administrator in Community B have for barring access to a large, supposedly successful program for training mentally retarded people to serve as aides in the special education program?

The settings in which I found five dozen handicapped employees in special education were all fairly open and supportive. I have no first-hand knowledge of regular classrooms or of the training which all educational personnel must undergo to obtain their places in teaching, administration, and support positions. Much of my data comes from my own interior landscape—the result of emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual experiences I have encountered in a life of educational reporting, of being a parent, and of my interest in diverse political, social, historical, and psychological ideas. Out of this mixture of my own personal material and that of the people and systems I encountered came this report and a few conclusions about the role of the handicapped in special education which I hope will be meaningful to the professional educators who read it.

My major conclusion is that handicapped people must be treated as people. I realize that this statement seems simplistic, and possibly the result of a deep bias, but I believe it must be stated. In discussing the handicapped with nonhandicapped officials I often got the impression that they were regarded as problems to be solved or burdens to be borne. From the cruel little jokes and the concerns about access and discipline, it was hard to read much humanity into the remarks some people made about the handicapped.

Indeed, my own preconceptions tended to diminish the humanity of the handicapped in my own mind. I approached the assignment with some fear and a lot of ignorance. Until I began my first trip, I had not realized how fearful and prejudiced I was. I feared that handicapped people really were different and that I would be uncomfortable and perhaps act callously in their

presence. Part of my fear was that I would have to brace myself against the emotional pain I expected to encounter.

The consideration, compassion, and interest of the ten employees I met in St. Louis County put me much more at ease. And much of my remaining fears washed away in a nursery school classroom in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I was standing a few steps inside the classroom door. I smiled and said, "Hi," to the children in front of me. They smiled and waved back. I looked down to my right. A boy was reclining on a large pillow, watching me intently. He could not move his body, but his eyes were bright with life. I winked and smiled. He replied with a tremendous, open-mouthed grin. It was one of the briefest encounters I ever had with a human being, and one of the most emotional.

That boy and his classmates taught me about a wider concept of the human condition. I was sure of the humanity that dwelt in all of those bodies. Although there may be substantial differences among human beings, there is also a tremendous similarity.

The children and adults I met became my teachers. Their bodies might not function as freely as mine, but they had identical needs for friendship, recognition, approval, and love. They might not see as well as I could, but they still needed to express themselves. They might not hear as well, but they had the same desire and ability to make a contribution. Many of the handicapped adults could do things I can't do. One legally blind teacher is an accomplished public speaker, a role I find difficult. An assistant superintendent was confined to a wheelchair, but his administrative and organizational skills far transcend my own. I gained tremendous respect for the people I interviewed. They had dealt with their conditions and most of them seemed devoid of self pity, an emotion I sometimes feel about conditions that are less traumatic or limiting.

Time and again I was reminded of the essential meaninglessness of labels. Labels have gone far beyond their original purpose of identifying conditions into functioning as stereotypes. Tiresome jokes about teachers who were or were not mentally retarded violated the reality that mentally retarded individuals can be employed by the schools. Those with whom I talked had a capacity for compassion and empathy that many so-called "normal" adults lack. And some of the most mobile employees had conditions that some schools would regard as a bar to employment. I was told that blind people could not serve as itinerant teachers. Yet I met three legally blind people who served or had served as itinerants. One of them also was physically limited.

In an age when federal law requires that the schools devise individual educational programs for handicapped children, the educational system still stereotypes and limits handicapped adults. All the interviewees focused on what they could do, not what they couldn't do. This was how they related to their schools and their jobs. A school wouldn't think of hiring a math teacher who couldn't multiply and divide or an industrial arts teacher who didn't know how to handle tools. Employers usually look at a person's attitude, knowledge, and ability. The handicapped individuals interviewed for this study had a high degree of all three qualities. Given a chance, they were able to prove themselves as outstanding employees. None of them asked for special deals or impossible assignments. The schools were able to find jobs that made maximum use of their talents at minimum difficulty because of their handicapping conditions. That is all that can be asked of any person or situation.

In this report, we are dealing with people at the upper end of the ability ladder. We sought the best instances of the employment of handicapped

people. Therefore, this report does not reflect the reality of schools which neglect or refuse to hire the handicapped. Because the focus is on special education, the report does not address the important problem of employment in the regular classroom nor does it deal with problems of physical barriers and attitudes in settings that have not had exposure to the handicapped.

This lack of exposure is unfortunate. It was especially unfortunate for me personally. I have been enriched by my interactions with handicapped people in this study, and nonhandicapped employees told me that they were better employees and better human beings because of their daily exposure to handicapped persons. If we are going to mainstream handicapped children, then we should also mainstream handicapped adults. Not every handicapped employee will be a real winner, any more than every nonhandicapped individual, but let's judge them on their merits as teachers, administrators, aides, and guidance counselors, not on how well they walk or whether they have 100 percent vision or hearing.

Part of the problem is sheer ignorance about the place of handicapped adults in American education today. The political and emotional focus remains on the handicapped child. Despite the flowering of activism among handicapped adults in some communities, there remains a titanic ignorance about the employment of the handicapped in education.

The employment of the handicapped in education needs to be more actively encouraged. This effort needs the active support of local, state, and federal education agencies and the associations that represent the handicapped. At present, there seems to be no organizational entity that is concerned about the employment of the handicapped in education. Only through increasing the employment of the handicapped can destructive stereotypes be counteracted.

Samuel James

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The publication of this report has been supported by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, United States Office of Education (G007601963). However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the Office of Education should be inferred.